

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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No. 1037.

NEW YORK, APRIL 17, 1918.

Price SIX Cents

AMONG THE FIRE-WORSHIPERS;

OR, TWO NEW-YORK BOYS IN MEXICO.

AND OTHER STORIES

By HOWARD AUSTIN.



The stock of Joe's rifle struck Loyola's head and he fell like a log, while the other, before he could defend himself, went down under a blow from Mickey's shillelagh. With the cords dangling from his wrists, Tom stood looking from side to side in amazement.

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TWO NEW YORK BOYS IN MEXICO

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CHAPTER I.

THREE AGAINST TWO.

It was an oppressively hot day in Mexico; such a heat as we, in our northern latitude, have never experienced.

Two young men, each twenty years old, perhaps, were sitting on the veranda of one of the principal hotels in the City of Mexico, smoking.

"It's a beastly hot climate, Joe," said one.

"Beastly! It's infernal. If there's anything in the lower regions worse than this I'd rather be excused from paying 'em a visit. Here I've been doing my best to keep cool all the morning, and I'm blessed if there's a dry thread on me. Ugh! it's infernal."

"Bedad, yer roight, sur. Me insides fale as if they war a gridiron, jist, wid a furnace underneath 'em."

"Hallo, Mickey Free! You here?"

"Faith, an' I am, what's left av me."

"Did you wish to speak to me?"

"I did that, sur."

"Fire away."

An expression of sadness came into the eyes of Mickey Free, and he lowered his voice and whispered:

"Me masther's dyin'."

"Dying!" exclaimed Tom Rulon. "Why, man, you must be mistaken. We left him last night as well and hearty as a man need be."

"He was tuk sudden after that, sur. The doctor says he's dyin'."

"What ails him?"

"Cholery."

"Cholera! Heavens! We'll be there right away. Run back, Mickey, and tell him we're coming."

Mickey Free hurried away, and as soon as they could dress for the street Joe Tremaine and Tom Rulon followed him.

A quarter of a mile distant, and fronting another square, is the hotel of Mickey's master.

The two young men were shown upstairs by a servant.

On the landing above they met an American doctor, who was just descending.

"Is it possible our friend is dying?" asked Tom.

"I fear he is. There doesn't seem to me to be the slightest hope for his life. I don't think he can live more than an hour. It is the worst case of cholera I ever saw."

"Do you leave him? Why don't you stay with him if he's as bad as that?"

"It does him no good. And, besides, I have other cases to attend to. My attention. I must not neglect any of them. Good day, gentlemen."

The doctor, being in some anger at the last question of the boys, bowed stiffly.

The doctor went on and knocked at the door of the

room of Mickey Free.

Joe asked, in a whisper.

"It's my belafe he's dyin'. An' he's axin fer yez constantly."

They went in and beheld a terrible sight.

A middle-aged man lay upon the bed, tossing wildly, moaning with pain, and ever and anon suffering such paroxysms as threatened to rend body and soul asunder.

At the time they entered he was in one of these paroxysms, and they started aghast at the thought of the fearful pain he was enduring.

Presently the spell passed over, and he lay weak and exhausted, with his eyes closed.

The young men were brave fellows, and it was not unmanly of them that their eyes should fill with tears.

His name was Robert Lord, and he had lately come from the wilds in the interior, where he had been prospecting.

After a while he opened his eyes, and his white lips smiled gratefully as he saw them.

"Come closer. Sit down on the side of the bed," he said faintly. "I have much to say before the next paroxysm—which I fear will be the last—comes upon me."

Tom and Joe sat down upon the side of the bed.

"Don't talk if it wearies you," said Joe.

"I must talk—I must speak. Good heavens! it will be lost forever, or fall into unworthy hands, if I die speechless."

A moan of pain burst from him, and then he continued:

"There is only one person of my blood living. That is my daughter, whose name is Clara Lord. She is at the Bedford Seminary, in the State of New York. Don't forget that—write it down."

Tom took out his tablets and had it down in an instant.

"Until a year ago," continued Mr. Lord, "I was a rich man. I lost my money suddenly, having only about two thousand dollars left. One thousand of that I left in the hands of the principal of the Bedford Seminary, to be applied to Clara's uses, and the other thousand I took to travel with in Mexico, to look after a piece of property there, which was all I saved out of the wreck of my fortune."

"The property is in the country of the Fire Worshipers, and it is worthless. It is rocky, hilly, with no mines upon it, and is useless for agricultural purposes. But even if it was the richest soil in the universe, it would be impossible to farm it, for the Fire Worshipers, the descendants of Montezuma, swarm around it in great numbers, and will kill without mercy any white man who enters their country, if they can catch him."

He looked toward Mickey, and signed to him to give him his medicine.

Mickey did so.

"Now leave the room," said the sick man.

Mickey went out and closed the door.

"I must hurry," continued Mr. Lord. "I feel the last paroxysm coming on, and I shall not live through it. Listen, now, and don't lose a word."

They assured him they were all attention.

"Although I found that my land was valueless, I discov-

ered something that was worth untold wealth if I could have got it to civilization."

"Was it so heavy that you could not carry it?"

"No; it was very light. I should have brought it away with me, but I was surprised by the Fire Worshipers. They chased me, and fearful that I should not escape, I hid the treasure in a cave.

"The cave is"—here he lowered his voice to a whisper—"the cave is in the mountains that form the boundary line between the counties of Chihuahua and Sonora, about eighty miles, as near as I can make out, from the Casas Grandes Ruins.

"To reach the place you had better go from Mexico to Vera Cruz, take steamer from thence to the Rio Grande, ascend the river to El Paso, where you will have to purchase horses. Strike to the southwest from there seventy miles until you reach the river San Miguel; follow it a hundred miles until you get to Casas Grandes. Then strike due west to the mountains, and find the cave. Will you do this?"

"We will."

"You will lose nothing. What you will find there is worth a million. Solemnly swear to give a third to my daughter Calara, and keep two-thirds for yourselves."

"We swear!"

There was silence for a moment. The damp of death was already spreading over the brow of Mr. Lord.

"Give us further directions," said Tom, quickly. "Of what does the treasure consist? In what part of the cave is it hidden?"

"The treasure—consists—of—"

That was all. Another paroxysm came on at that instant, and when it was over Mr. Lord was lying dead.

The two young men had not been the only listeners to this strange recital.

The walls between the rooms were very thin, as they are in all the hotels of that city.

In the adjoining room were three men, and by means of slight holes in the partitions they had heard a part of what was said.

The whole story was clear to them, except the place where the treasure was hidden, which, by reason of the relator lowering his voice to a faint whisper when it was spoken of, they had not heard.

One of these men was a Mexican, another a Spaniard, and the third an Englishman.

The Mexican was of a dirty yellow color, with low brow and retreating forehead.

The Spaniard was dark, swarthy, thin, and agile, a slippery fellow in a close tussle, and one who would be likely to give trouble.

The Englishman was one of those cockneys who are to be found all over the world. Large, muscular, with a closely cropped head and bull-dog face.

When death closed the utterances of Mr. Lord forever they drew back from the partition, and leaving the room in which they had been listening, passed through the hall and went out on the veranda.

Here, choosing a corner all to themselves, they sat down and consulted.

"A treasure, senors—a treasure!" whispered the Mexican.

"Worth a million!" hissed the Spaniard. "If we can get it we will be rich."

"Very true, gents," said the Englishman. "But as we don't know where it is, 'ow are we going to get it?"

The Mexican turned still yellower, and the Spaniard darker still.

"Follow the Americans," they both hissed together. "Never lose sight of them an instant, and when we have tracked them to the spot—"

"Well?" said the Englishman.

The others made an expressive gesture.

"I see 'ow 'tis," said the Englishman. "Knock 'em on the head, you know, and take it. Is that it?"

The Spaniard and Mexican assented.

"All right," said the Englishman. "Go ahead, my hearties. If a Spaniard, a Mexican, and an Englishman can't get the best of two Americans, it's queer. Count me in."

CHAPTER II.

FOLLOWED.

Tom and Joe called in Mickey and left him with his dead master, and then they went out and engaged persons to perform the last sad offices.

After this they went to the doctor and obtained a burial certificate, and then went to the cemetery to purchase a lot in which to inter the body, for they did not intend to have him placed in common ground, among the paupers.

And wherever they went the Mexican followed, never losing sight of them an instant, until they returned to the hotel, and he, having questioned one of the waiters, ascertained beyond a doubt that they were stopping there.

After which, the Mexican went away to impart his information to the Spaniard and the Englishman.

The next day all that was mortal of Mr. Lord was committed to the earth.

Upon their return to the hotel they sat down and wrote a letter to Clara Lord, at the seminary in Bedford, informing her, in the most delicate language they could command, of her father's death.

They also wrote that they would send that day by express, his watch and chain, some trinkets that were found upon him, and several hundred dollars in money.

This they did, and then, that part of the business being over, they sat down to consider what should be done in relation to the story Mr. Lord had told them before his death.

One was inclined to believe that the story was a mere chimera—the imagination of an overwrought brain, but the other would not have it so.

"His story was told too clearly," he said. "There was no rambling about it." And he believed that Mr. Lord was as sane as any man living when the death paroxysm came upon him.

Finally it was determined that, as they had come to Mexico in search of adventure—and a journey to that wild part of the country offered enough of it—they would visit the spot mentioned and make the search.

If nothing came of it, well and good. There was nothing to lose, at any rate; while if they found what Mr. Lord spoke of they would be independently rich from that moment.

They had hardly come to this conclusion when Mickey Free was announced.

"The top av the mornin' to yer honors," saluted Mickey. "I'm hopin' to see ye well?"

"Very well. What can we do for you, Mickey?"

"Ye can take me to worruk for you, sir."

"We're not going to remain in the city, my lad."

"Thin, bejabers, I'll be goin' out av it wid yez."

"We are going on a very perilous undertaking, hundreds of miles away, where there will be more hard knocks received than dollars."

"Bedad, if it comes to the hard knocks, Mickey Free's afraid of no row."

"It's no use, Mickey; we can't take you."

"Is your honor manin' it?"

Being assured that the two young men did mean it, and that their decision was unalterable, Mickey went away.

"Faith, I'll be afther showin' them," he muttered, as soon as he was out of hearing. "Will I be stayin' behind in this beastly city? Hoo! divil a bit!"

Tom and Joe immediately commenced making their preparations to leave the city.

They purchased a good rifle each, and a brace of pistols, with ammunition sufficient for a long hunt.

They then secured a hunting costume, and packed it securely in their trunks. Then they bought bowie knives, which were formidable-looking enough, with their sharp edges and needle points, to frighten all the Fire Worshiper in existence.

Everything being complete, they set off by train for Vera Cruz.

Their car, a first-class one, was followed by another second-class, attached to the same train.

In this car were our three villainous acquaintances: Mexican, the Spaniard and the Englishman.

In it, also, was another who is destined to claim share of our attention hereafter.

It was no other than Mickey Free.

Mickey kept his eye on the trio from differin' for he did not like their looks.

Not that he suspected any designs they had young New Yorkers, for he had no idea that he had seen Tom and Joe before, but it was their which attracted his attention, for he thought the villainous-looking faces he had ever seen these three, who sat only one or two seats from him on the other side of the aisle, were the

Through the whole of the long trip they were

conversing in whispers, and often looked warily around to see that no one was near enough to them to hear what was being said.

One thing which Mickey Free heard confirmed him in his suspicions of the three men, although it gave him no reason to think they were on the track of Tom and Joe.

The Mexican at last said, in a louder voice than usual:

"We will be more than a match for them!"

"Diable!" said the Spaniard. "I should think so."

"Shut up, you fools!" muttered the Englishman. "Do you want to let everybody know, and put 'em on their guard?"

"Bejabers, I know yer game!" muttered Mickey, under his breath. "Ye're train robbers, that's what ye are, an' yer watchin' a chance to kick up a divil av a row and clane out the passengers. I'll kape an eye on yez, me hearties, an' at the first show av the game me shillelah'll be batin' the divil's tattoo on yer skulls, an' me barker'll trate yez to a dose av pills fer nothin', be the token."

Mickey Free's alarm on that score was needless, for the trio created no disturbance, but on the contrary, behaved very quietly until Vera Cruz was reached.

He noticed, however, that at every station at which the train stopped, one of the trio—the Mexican general—left the car and stood on the platform, from which post he scrutinized the face of every passenger who left the car in front, not returning until the train was in motion.

At Vera Cruz the steamer was waiting, ready to leave for Galveston, touching on the way at the mouth of the Rio Grande.

When they had been out a few hours and Tom and Joe were sitting on the promenade-deck, Mickey Free came sauntering up.

He knew well enough they were there, but was sauntering on, with his hands in his pockets, apparently not having seen them, whistling "The Rose of Killarney," when Tom hailed him:

"Halloo, Mickey Free! I thought we told you we couldn't have you with us?"

"It's moighty consated ye are," returned Mickey, with a grin. "Did ye suppose I wanted to stay in that bastely Mixeko an' swell up wid the cholery an' bust, bedad? It's on me way home to the States I am. I s'pose an Irish bye's as good a roight to ride over the salt say on this boat as yersilves. An' it's my b'lafe there's passengers aboard that ain't so good as Mickey Free. Look over yer shoulders to the right an' you'll be afther seein' who I'm manin'."

Looking in the direction indicated, they saw the Spaniard, Mexican and Englishman, whose eyes were upon them.

They turned away quickly, with a guilty look, when they saw they were observed.

"Villains, the whole of them!" exclaimed Joe. "What do you know of 'em, Mickey?"

Mickey related the conversation he had overheard on the train.

They came to the conclusion that the trio were contemplating villainy of some kind, probably the rifling of the passengers' staterooms, while they slept, and they resolved to keep an eye upon them.

Not once did the faintest suspicion that they were following themselves enter their minds.

If it had much trouble might have been avoided.

The three foreigners behaved themselves while on the voyage, and in course of time the Rio Grande was reached.

At that point they changed to another steamer going up the river.

They bade Mickey good-by.

"Faith, ye naden't say good-by just yet," said Mickey with a grin. "I'm thinkin' I'd loike a bit av a trip up this same river uv wather."

"But we are going to El Paso."

"Bedad, that's the same place where I've got business."

The young men laughed.

"Go your own way, Mickey."

"To that same, sor."

The Spaniard, the Mexican, and the Englishman followed Mickey Free aboard the river steamer.

"I'm thinkin' thim swate creatures hav' tuk a chance av yer company," muttered Mickey Free. "Phat chance anyhow? Kape your top eye open, Mickey."

They rode to El Paso, and here horses were bought, and on their ride of seventy miles to the San Antonio, saying good-by to Mickey Free, and thinking they were well rid of him at last.

But they were decidedly mistaken.

When ten miles out a horseman came galloping up behind them.

It was Mickey Free, mounted on a long-legged mule.

"Whoa! ye baste!" cried Mickey, drawing rein beside them. "The divil's intil the onery brute. It's tin times, if it's wunst, he's pitch-poled me, till I've got no hair at all lift on the top av me head, sure, from scourin' it off in the sand whin I struck. Och! ye long-legged spalpeen, be still, will ye, now, or I'll be afther breakin' yer crooked back wid me lump as a shillelah, jist."

"Mickey Free, do you intend to follow us, whether we want you or not?"

"Bedad, ye've hit it, sor. Mickey Free'll stick like a leech, an' if there's any fightin' to be done, he'll take a hand in it. An' yer bein' followed by wuss nor me, I'm thinking."

"Who is following us?"

Mickey turned in his saddle.

"Look ahind yez!" he cried.

Wheeling around, they looked in the direction indicated, and saw, just ascending an elevation two miles in the rear, three figures, who disappeared the instant they saw they were observed.

The three figures were the Mexican, the Spaniard, and the Englishman, hovering in the rear like beasts of prey, waiting for the time to come to strike.

CHAPTER III.

AMONG THE FIRE WORSHIPERS.

They pulled their horses up short.

"What do those fellows mean?" demanded Tom.

"Don't be axin' me. But if ye'd be havin' me opinyun, what don't know anything about it, I'd be tellin' ye they're followin' yerselves."

"Why in the name of heaven should they follow us?"

"Niver a wanst can I tell yez."

"Tom," said Joe, "could they have found out our secret?"

"Pshaw! how could that be? Of course they have not. We were alone when it was told us, and in a whisper so low that it hardly reached our ears. Bah! we're frightened at our shadows. We don't even know they are the three foreigners."

"Go way wid yez!" cried Mickey. "Av coorse we know it. Didn't I pass 'em on the road?"

"Well, then, I suppose they are out prospecting. Let's go on, and not trouble our heads about them."

They drove on at a good pace, and neither that day nor the next, nor until they arrived at the ruins of Casas Grandes, did they see anything of the three ruffians.

Camping here one night, the next morning, at daybreak, they started for the mountains, shaping their course due west by compass, as directed by the instructions of Mr. Lord.

That night they went into camp within sight of the mountains, which they reached at nine o'clock next morning, and still no appearance of the ruffianly trio.

Riding up as high as the horses could ascend, they fastened the animals securely, and then started off in search of game for dinner, each taking different directions.

But first they told Mickey the whole story of what they came for, seeing that they could trust him, and he was very much surprised thereat.

Mickey Free, after he had gone a mile or so, had the good fortune to shoot a mountain goat.

He was sitting by the side of it, taking the skin off, when he felt a hand placed on his shoulder.

Looking up he saw, standing beside him, a man who, from descriptions he had heard of the race, he instantly knew to be one of the Fire Worshipers, the remnants of the people of the Montezumas.

The Aztec was tall and muscular, well dressed in a fanciful costume, and was armed with a lance, and bow and arrows.

Mickey knew that they were extremely jealous of intruders, and for a white man to be caught in their haunts was death.

Unfortunately, he had left his rifle twenty yards off, and to gain it was impossible. And as his pistols were but-

toned in their leather cases, he would have no time to get them ready.

Failing all else, he determined to employ diplomacy.

"How d'ye do, sur?" he asked, looking up with a sickly grin. "I'm hopin' yer honor is in good health the day."

"The white man who comes here dies," said the Aztec, in very broken English, which we shall not attempt to give. "Get up, white man, and meet your doom."

"If yer honor plazes," said Mickey, trembling with fear, "I'm not a white man. I'm an Irishman."

"No words. Get up."

"Bedad, sor, I'm tired; an' be yer kind lave I'd rather rist a bit."

The Aztec made a motion with his lance.

Mickey sprang up in a second.

"Now, white man, die!"

The Aztec poised the lance.

"Gel-ory!" shouted Mickey. "Hooray! Give it to him, me laddy bucks! Fire intil him!"

The Aztec, taken off his guard, turned to look behind him.

As quick as a flash Mickey seized his shillelah, which was never far from him, and with a whoop which would have done credit to a trotter in his native bog, whirled it aloft and brought it down upon the Aztec's head.

Down he went, as stiff as a post.

"Whoop!" shouted Mickey. "Hoop-la! How do ye like that, ye hathen? I'm thinkin' I made the sparks fly out av yer thick skull, sence ye like 'em so well, ye fire-atin Fire Worshiper, ye!"

He went after his rifle, loaded it, returned to the goat, cut off one of the haunches, took away the Fire Worshiper's lance and bow and arrows, shouldered the haunch, and left the vicinity as fast as his legs would carry him.

He was not long reaching camp, where he found Tom and Joe, each with some meat, for game was plenty.

The young men had seen nothing of Fire Worshipers, or, what was worse, perhaps, of the murderous trio who were on their track, and they received Mickey's story with some alarm.

But as the spot where they were was as safe as any they knew of, they concluded to remain and eat their dinner there.

Dinner over, they were stretched out lazily on the grass, when they were surprised by a voice which seemed to come from the air above them.

The voice was sweet and musical, and it said:

"Senors, I have come to warn you."

Leaping to their feet, they saw standing on the cliff above them a young girl.

She was lithe and graceful, and carried in her left hand a small bow, while in her right was a small lance.

She was fancifully dressed in garments made of tanned skins of the mountain goat.

The young man gazed at the apparition in amazement for a moment, and then Tom said:

"Warn us of what?"

"Of danger, quick and sudden; of death, sure and certain, if you remain here. One of you to-day injured a man high in power among the Aztecs."

"Begorra, 'twas mesilf that knocked the spalpeen down, an' mighty sorry I am if he was any relashun av yours, me swate sprig of shamrock," said Mickey gallantly.

"My people found him and brought him to life again. He told how he was injured. They have sworn to have the life of the man. They will follow his tracks and come upon you all. I dare stay no longer. They will find me here."

She turned as if to leave.

"Stay!" cried Tom. "Stay!"

She made a gesture of farewell.

"Howld on a minute, me dark beauty!" called out Mickey Free. "Do yez happen to know anything av a bit av a cave around these parts?"

"There is one half a mile away, in that direction," she said, and then bounded away with the speed of an antelope, disappearing behind a boulder.

"The very cave we're looking for, I'll bet a dollar!" exclaimed Joe.

"I'll go halves on that, sur," put in Mickey.

"If we've got to run from these Fire Worshipers, we may as well run there as anywhere else. Besides, if we shut ourselves up there they can't come upon us from the rear. And we'll search for the treasure."

Catching up their arms, they bounded away.

Running due west, as nearly as they could judge, they came, at the end of half a mile, to a large precipice in the side of which was a narrow opening.

Squeezing through the place, they found themselves in a circular chamber.

"Bed d, the murtherin' Fire Worshipers'll not asily track us here over the rocks," exclaimed Mickey Free.

"Don't be too sure of that. They may find us before night."

"Thin we've got till night to find the treasure an' get out av this. Let's search, an' if we find it, cut an' run back to the horses, an' get out av this divil's half acre as fast as the legs av the baste can carry us."

The sides of the cave were rough and uneven, and there were many places where objects might have been concealed.

They commenced searching these places eagerly.

While this was going on a yellow face peered in at the entrance to the cave.

It was the villainous countenance of the Mexican.

And beside him were the Spaniard and the Englishman.

"They're searching," whispered the Mexican.

His small, ferret eyes glistened with the fire of expectation.

For some moments the search proceeded, the nooks and crevices being examined one after the other.

All at once Mickey Free exclaimed:

"Hooray! Hoopla! Ould Ireland and Americky foriver! I've got it!"

Tom and Joe leaped to his side.

Their backs were to the entrance to the cave.

The Mexican's basilisk eyes glistened.

"Upon them!" he whispered. "They've found it!"

Serpent-like, the three glided into the cave, with drawn knives.

They gathered themselves for the spring.

"Upon them!" hissed the Spaniard. "One blow and the treasure's ours."

Like an avalanche they leaped forward.

CHAPTER IV.

IN A TRAP.

Just at the instant when the Mexican, the Englishman and the Spaniard leaped forward, Mickey Free, hearing a slight noise, happened to turn his head.

In an instant he realized his danger.

But he could do nothing to avert it.

His shillelah, that quickest of all weapons with an Irishman, was lying upon the rocky floor in a distant corner of the cave.

Before one of them could draw a weapon the villainous trio were upon them.

"Howly St. Patrick!" shouted Mickey, snatching his hand from the fissure where he thought he felt the treasure. "There's the divil an' his imps upon us, bedad! Look out fer yersilves, me lads!"

But it was too late.

Before our friends could raise a hand to defend themselves, the trio had clubbed their muskets and struck heavy blows.

Those upon Tom and Joe were well directed.

The stocks of the muskets came down heavily upon their heads. They fell to the ground like logs.

Mickey Free, better prepared, had dodged, but he could not entirely avoid the blow struck by the Englishman.

It came down upon his shoulder, instead of his head for the instant he saw stars.

"Och! Murther! I'm kilt intirely," he shouted, and a dash for the entrance.

He avoided the Englishman, but the Spaniard, a cat, was upon him quick as lightning.

He seized him, and twined his lithe limbs around Mickey was the Spaniard's superior in strength, ing like his equal in agility.

Taking the shock to his system from the consideration, it would have been very nearly fatal, with no margin for betting on either side, had not been let alone.

But the Mexican and Englishman had no chance this.

Having won thus far, they intended to finish the job so well begun.

As the Spaniard and Mickey were engaged in the hard struggle they stood as near as they could get, with their muskets raised ready to deal the Irishman a blow that would finish him.

The opportunity was not long coming.

For a moment the combatants were still, gathering strength for a new struggle.

That instant was seized by the Mexican.

He was behind Mickey, and the latter could not observe his actions.

With a fiendish grin which rendered his greasy face hideous and showed his yellow fangs, he raised his musket. It descended.

Whack!

The blow was well directed. It took Mickey squarely upon the head, and he went down like a shot.

"Diable!" hissed the Spaniard, straightening himself up, and wiping the perspiration from his brow. "The rascal fought well."

"And if you had been alone he would have got the best of you, notwithstanding the blow on his shoulder," said the Englishman. "He is a little too much for you, is that Irishman, when he is all right, Senor Spaniard."

The Spaniard made no reply, assenting by his silence.

"We must get the treasure and decamp," said the Mexican impatiently. "The first thing we know those fiends of Fire Worshipers will be prowling around here, and I can tell you they're no mean foes to have swarming like locusts about you."

The Englishman shrugged his shoulders.

"I shouldn't like 'em to catch us here in this trap," he said. "I'd prefer a clear field if it comes to a tussle with 'em."

"Then hurry," said the Spaniard.

The Spaniard went to the fissure where Mickey had his hand when he asserted that he had found the treasure, and inserted his hand therein.

He uttered an exclamation of joy.

"It's here!" he shouted. "And it feels like diamonds of an enormous size."

The other two trembled with excitement.

"Draw it out!" shouted the Englishman.

"Let's see our fortunes," said the Spaniard, his brown face becoming pale.

The hand of the Mexican emerged from the fissure.

It was filled with some small, hard substances.

Trembling like a leaf, he unclosed his hand.

The other two crowded closely and looked.

Looked once, and then recoiled with exclamations of dismay.

That which the Mexican held in his hand consisted of broken bits of rock.

Farewell to the treasure!

In their greed, and haste to possess themselves of the spoil, they had sprung the trap too soon.

The Mexican uttered a fearful curse in his native language. The Englishman gave vent to his disappointment in horrible oaths.

"Our cursed folly has spoiled all!" hissed the Spaniard, his face convulsed with rage.

"I don't see that we are any worse off than we were before," said the more phlegmatic Englishman, who, by reason of his cooler temperament, recovered the more quickly from the shock. "Let us continue the search, and if the treasure is really here we shall find it as quickly as they could, now that we know the locality."

This advice was acted upon, but first the Mexican was at the entrance of the cave, on the outside, to guard against surprise by the Fire Worshipers, if any should open that way, and chance to look into the cave.

Then the other two commenced the search for the treasure.

It was useless.

As they would, in every crevice and fissure in the cave they found either nothing at all, or bits of broken

They attentively and critically examined the floor of the cave, allowing not a square inch to its surface to escape

entirely useless. Nothing came of it except disappointment. At last they gave it up, and stood gazing at each other with faces like fiends.

"Foiled!" hissed the Spaniard.

"For the time," said the Englishman, more quietly. "The worst of it is that, if these fellows recover from the blows we gave 'em, they'll know our game now."

"Recover!" hissed the Spaniard. "They shall not recover if my gun stock is strong enough to beat their brains out."

In his rage he would have sprung upon them and taken the little life that still remained to them—if, indeed, they were alive at all.

In a second he was at Joe's side and had his musket poised to bring it down upon his head and finish the work so fiendishly and cowardly begun.

To the Englishman Joe this time owed his life.

As quick as lightning he sprang to the Spaniard's side, and caught his arm and arrested the blow as it was descending.

"You fool!" he cried. "Don't you see that would ruin all."

The Spaniard glared at him savagely.

"We want 'em to live, so that we can still track 'em up and take from them what they find," continued the Englishman. "In that way we shall have two strings to our bow. We can search, ourselves, and they'll search for us, for we'll manage to rid 'em of what they find."

The Spaniard let his arm fall.

"You are right, senor," he said. "I am too hot-headed to engage in an enterprise like this."

"Which requires coolness," said the Englishman. "No matter. My cool head will make amends for your hot one, and preserve the balance. We will yet succeed, and leave this beastly region rolling in riches."

Before the Spaniard could reply, the Mexican rushed in.

His face had a startled expression.

"The Fire Worshipers!" he whispered fearfully.

"Where?"

"Not a quarter of a mile away. I saw them as they came over a hill. They are coming straight toward the cave."

"We must get out of here."

Snatching up their weapons, and those of Joe, Tom and Mickey, they ran through the entrance of the cave, and crouching down in the bushes, sneaked away from the dangerous vicinity.

No sooner had they gone than Joe Tremaine arose to his feet.

He had recovered his senses while the three villains of different nations were searching for the treasure.

But he knew that his only chance of life depended on his remaining quiet, leaving them to think that he was still insensible.

He hurried to the side of Tom and Mickey, and shook them.

They did not speak, but Tom uttered a groan.

As for Mickey, he had received the last and hardest blow, and was apparently dead.

Joe bent over them and felt the pulse of each.

They beat faintly, showing that they still lived.

They would be all right again, but not in time to be of service if the Fire Worshipers were to attack the cave.

Joe had heard the Mexican say the Fire Worshipers were coming, and he believed that the news was equivalent to his doom.

Had he left the cave immediately, he might have escaped; but that would have been to leave Tom and Mickey lying on the floor insensible, an easy prey to the Fire Worshipers.

He recoiled from that. It was not in his nature to desert a friend, and leave him to certain death.

He resolved to make a stand, and if worse came to the worst, die with them.

He looked around for the rifles.

They were gone. There was in the cave no weapon of defense, except Mickey's shillelah.

He took that up, and going to the entrance, stood ready to defend his friends with his life.

He was not left long in suspense.

The footsteps of a large number of men were heard approaching, and they halted in front of the opening.

They had tracked the three to the cave.

For a moment they conversed together, probably deliberating as to what should be their next move.

Joe could hear them distinctly, but could not understand a word of the language, which was guttural.

Then the conversation ceased, and there was a forward movement.

They intended to search the cave.

With Mickey's shillelah raised, ready to strike a deadly blow, Joe waited for the first of the Fire Worshipers to appear.

CHAPTER V.

DESPAIR.

The time of action came on the instant.

Cautiously approaching, apparently fearful of danger, a Fire Worshiper pushed his head and shoulders in through the entrance, and peered into the semi-darkness of the cave, shading his eyes with his hand.

Joe's opportunity had come.

His shillelah was raised aloft with both hands, ready to deliver the blow.

With all the force of both his arms he brought down the club.

Crunch!

It struck the Fire Worshiper squarely upon the head, and crushed his skull like an eggshell.

He fell like a log, and lay without a quiver of the muscles, dead before he struck.

His fall partially blocked up the entrance.

But, nevertheless, another came on quickly, and was served the same way.

The entrance was now so completely blocked that it was impossible for another Fire Worshiper to pass without climbing over the other two, and entering half bent.

This would have consumed too much time, and by putting them in a cramped position, would, the Fire Worshipers knew, be suicidal.

They retreated, rushing pell-mell out of the passage, and dragging their dead comrades with them.

Joe had now leisure to turn his attention to Tom and Mickey.

Tom was sitting up, rubbing his eyes with one hand, and feeling of his sore head with the other.

His ideas were confused, and he was trying to recollect what had happened.

Knowing that he could hear the Fire Worshipers as they entered, and reach the passage before they could possibly enter, Joe went to Tom, took hold of him, and got him upon his feet.

"Never say die, old man," he whispered.

"What's the matter?" muttered Tom. "My head feels as if a nest of hornets had got inside somehow, and were buzzing like the Yankee nation."

"So did mine a while ago, but it's all right now, and so will yours be by-and-by."

"Oh, I remember. I received a blow on the head, and got knocked out of time."

"And Mickey and I weren't far behind you."

"Who did it? The Fire Worshipers?"

"Not a bit of it. You remember those three fellows, the Mexican, the Spaniard, and the Englishman, who were following us?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Well, it's to their tender mercies we are indebted for this beautiful fix we are in."

In a few words he told the story.

Tom looked blank.

"We're in for it," he muttered. "How under the sun did the three rascals find out about the treasure, and that we were after it?"

"That gets me. I've been trying to get an idea, but can't. No matter, they know. And between them and the Fire Worshipers, it strikes me we're in a fair way to be used up."

"I think, with the shillelah and pieces of rock, we can keep 'em out of the cave."

"And they can keep us in. Why, they can guard the entrance until they starve to death."

"We must make a break before that time comes."

"Is it breakin' yer spakin' av?" muttered a doleful voice. "Begorra, I've had me full share av that same, for me head's all bruk to pieces."

They looked around and saw Mickey sitting up on the floor of the cave, holding his head between his hands.

"Howly St. Patrick! it's kilt I am intirely!" he groaned. "Me head fales as if it was as big as a cart wheel, jist, an' tin thousand little divils a knockin' the inside av it wid sledge-hammers."

"You're all right, Mickey, my boy," laughed Tom. "Didn't

I feel the same five minutes ago? Well, I guess not! Get up, Mickey, and stir around a little, and you'll feel better."

"Is it yersilf, Misther Tom?" asked Mickey, as the situation dawned upon him. "Glory be to the saints that we're not kilt."

Mickey got upon his feet, and as his sluggish circulation was increased by the movement, he soon felt better.

Joe told him of the Fire Worshipers outside.

"To Ould Nick wid the Fire Worshipers!" cried Mickey valiantly. "Didn't I knock the brains out av the head divil av 'em a while ago? An' I'll sarve the rest av the spalpeens the same way if they thry to come intil us. Where's me shillelah?"

"I took possession of it, Mickey, and it has done good service, as you may judge by the hair upon it. Two of the wretches will worship fire no more."

"Hiven be praised! Give us the sthick, Misther Joe. A Tipperary man understands better nor you how to put on the illegant flourishes an' strike the natest lick wid that delicate weapon, jist. Faith, I'll show ye some foine worruk if they thry it on agin, an' ye'll hear the skull av 'em crack like eggshells. Hoo! Come on, ye fire 'atin' thaves av the gutter, an' give a Tipperary man a chance to bate the Devil's Tattoo on yer onery pates wid his lump av a shillelah!"

"Be quiet, Mickey."

"Is it quiet ye'd have me bein', whin there's a foine chance fer an illegant row? Give me the club av a sthick, Joe, me jewel, an' I'll take me place by the passage, an' niver a worrud shall ye hear out o' me at all—at all."

Joe handed the shillelah to its more experienced owner, who took his position at the inside entrance to the passage, and for a moment no sound was heard.

Presently Mickey looked around and held up his finger warningly.

"They're comin'," he whispered. "Wan of the imps is crapin' along the passage."

Joe and Tom caught up bits of rock.

"Be ready, Mickey," they whispered.

Mickey was twirling his shillelah as none but a Tipperary man can do it, his fingers itching for a chance to use it.

"Faith, the spalpeen's thought better av it," he whispered. "He's stopped. Sure he's going to back out."

The Fire Worshiper had paused, indeed, but he had not changed his original intention, for he had not meant to come further when he started.

There was a turn in the passage which protected him, and just beyond the turn he stopped.

Then he asked in deep, guttural tones, and in very broken English which they could only comprehend with the greatest difficulty:

"White men, how many of you are in the cave?"

"None of your business," said Joe, promptly.

"I know—there are three."

"Thin why the divil did ye ask, ye thafe?" demanded Mickey Free.

"Be quiet, Mickey."

"Sure I will, sur."

"Well, Mr. Fire Worshiper, since you know our number, what are you going to do about it?"

"An Aztec never forgives an injury."

"How have we injured you?"

"One of your number struck me, the chief of all the Aztecs."

"An' knocked ye down, bedad," shouted Mickey Free. "Why don't ye tell the hull av it, ye fire 'atin' spalpeen, yez?"

"Look here, Mickey," said Joe, savagely, "if you don't keep quiet, I'll throw you out among 'em, and they can eat you, for all I care. Sir Aztec, the man who struck you so to save his life. If you had let him alone he wouldn't have touched you. But let that pass. What is your demand?"

"That the man who struck me shall be given up to geance."

"We'll see you hanged first."

"And the others may go free, on condition that they leave these mountains."

"Much obliged, I'm sure; but we can't accept a f on those terms."

"Then you shall all die."

"Catch your hare before you skin him."

"Do you refuse?"

"With scorn. Now take yourself off, and the you heathen dogs who shows his greasy top-knot cave will get it broken."

The Fire Worshiper retreated.

"Begorra, ye settled the beggar's hash in a hurry," said Mickey. "But look here, Joe, darlint. We'll niver be able to git out av this at all, an' faith, I think I'd better go out an' surrinder to thim divils an' let you go free, for it's mesilf got ye into this muss by knockin' down that divil of a fire 'ater."

"And you did it to save your life. No—no, Mickey, you've stood by us and we'll stand by you. And before they get you to experiment on they'll have to take us."

"Hallo! what are they up to now?" asked Tom.

There was a commotion among the Fire Worshipers outside, and they seemed to be holding a consultation, for first one spoke and then another.

Presently part of them could be heard leaving.

"That means business," muttered Tom. "I wonder what'll happen next."

"Some deviltry, no doubt. Have your shillelah ready, Mickey."

"Sure it's itchin' to crack a skull, sur."

But no attack was made. Instead, in a few minutes sounds were heard as though brush were being thrown around the entrance.

"They're afther thryin' to kape us in wid a hape av brush, bedad," said Mickey, with a chuckle. "Ye naydn't take the throuble, ye firelovin' fools—there's niver a fear that we'll break out wid a yellin' pack like yersilves foreninst us."

"Worse than that," said Tom, hoarsely. "They're going to smoke us out."

"Howly sufferin' saints!" ejaculated Mickey.

They shuddered as the dread significance of this broke upon them. They would be driven to the choice of two evils, either of which would be fatal. Either to remain in the cave and be suffocated, or rush out and be cut to pieces by the Fire Worshipers, as they emerged, half blinded by the smoke.

They looked at each other in despair.

No one spoke—there was no need.

Presently the glow of fire shone in through the opening. The brush was blazing.

Then some damp substance was thrown upon the heap of brush, partially smothering the fire and producing dense clouds of smoke.

Instantly the atmosphere in the cave became suffocating.

They all commenced to cough.

It was impossible to endure it.

"Let's make a rush for the outside," cried Tom, in a voice which was choked with smoke. "If we must die, don't let it be like rats in a trap, but in the open air, fighting for our lives. Away we go!"

CHAPTER VI.

DESPERATION.

"Howld on!" shouted Mickey Free, as well as he could speak in the dense atmosphere. "For the love av Hiven do nothing rash. It's death to go outside."

"And it's death to remain here. Come—hurry, while we've strength to fight."

"Howld! It's time enough to go intil death whin we can't go anywhere else. Niver a wanst will I run intil the jaws av thim divils outside. I'm afther goin' the other way."

"Which way?" demanded Tom. "Do you expect to hew a path through the solid rock?"

"Sure I don't; but there's a passage ready made forninst e."

And so there was. Indeed, there were two of them, narrow passages both, leading into the interior of the mountain.

The smoke'll suffocate us there as well as here," said Joe. Bedad, it's worth thryin'.

Onything's betther nor rushin' intil the midst av them Worshipers, an' havin' 'em spear 'm thinkin'."

"Let's try the passage," coughed Tom.

Right. You proposed the cruise, Mickey—be the

made I will, sur; an' it can't be worse nor what's waitin' for us t'other way."

Mickey rushed into the nearest passage, and the others followed.

It was so narrow that only one could pass through it at a time.

They were in semi-darkness, which presently became total as the smoke increased.

An idea suddenly occurred to Mickey.

It was one that he could not keep to himself, and he blurted it out as he groped his way along.

"Bejabers! mebbe the treasure's hid in this passage," he blurted out.

"Bother the treasure! Who in thunder cares for the treasure now. If we escape with our lives, I'll be thankful, and the treasure can go to the dickens—for all me."

Mickey said no more, but he kept up a powerful thinking, for all that.

It seemed to him that they were fools to conclude that the treasure was not in the cave, because they had not found it in the main chamber.

And he determined that if they escaped alive he would have another try for it.

"It's bastely dark," he muttered, "and I can't see me hand afore me, at all—at all. Wurra! phat a divil av a pickle it is fer a poor bye to be put in! Bad luck till the fire 'atin' — Hoo! Murther! I'm shlippin' to the divil! Howld me back! Och! Murther! Hilp!"

Mickey's further utterance was checked by his being splashed, heels over head, into a pool of water, cold as ice.

He had slipped down an inclined plane, or shelf of rock, so steep that when he found himself going he could not stop.

The water checked him in his descent, and in his utterance together.

He did not touch the bottom.

How deep it was he had no means of knowing, for as quick as a flash he came to the surface, puffing and blowing.

"It's drowned I am, entirely," he shouted, as he blew the water from his mouth. "For the love av St. Patrick, hilp me out av this, or it's the last ye'll iver see av Mickey Free."

It was as dark as Erebus, and they could not see what they were doing.

Besides, the smoke, which flung low, and became more dense in the vicinity of the water, nearly suffocated them.

But Mickey must be got out of that. And quickly, too, for the Fire Worshipers would rush into the cave as soon as the brush was consumed, thinking to find them insensible, and an easy prey to their vengeance.

Coming upon them in their present defenseless condition—for Mickey's shillelah had gone with him into the water—they could kill or capture them almost without resistance.

Tom put his foot on the rock, beyond where it sloped downward.

Instantly he drew it back.

It was so steep, and the rock so slippery, that if he got both feet upon it he must instantly find himself in the same condition as Mickey, floundering in the pool below.

What was to be done to help Mickey, who could be heard floundering about?

"Can't you climb up?" cried Joe.

"Niver a bit can I climb up" shouted Mickey. "Sure a cat couldn't hould fast wid its claws, it's that harrud the bastely rock is. Sure it's the divil half acre I've got intil, an' it's death to the poor spalpeen that's cotched in it."

"Swim around the edges, and perhaps you can find a ledge to creep out upon."

Mickey took this advice, which proved good.

They heard the splashing of the water as he commenced the circuit.

Presently they heard him raise himself out of the water.

"I've found a shilf!" he shouted. "An' now I'm out av the wather an' sittin' on it."

"Can you rejoin us?"

"Divil a bit."

Although they could not see an inch before their eyes, they looked at each other in dismay.

The passage terminated at the pool, apparently.

Had Mickey been with them, they would have made the attempt to reach the main chamber of the cave again, and try to escape along the other passage.

But to do this now they would have to leave Mickey behind.

This they would never do.

And even had they been cravens enough, the chance was gone in a moment more, for they heard the Fire Worshipers rushing through the entrance of the cave.

The fire out, the smoke commenced to lift, and they could see dimly, but not enough to discern Mickey.

In a moment more the Fire Worshipers entered the passage.

They carried a torch, whose light could be seen shining.

In a moment it would be all over with them

At the instant Mickey's voice was heard.

He, too, had comprehended the danger of the two young men, and realized that his situation was not better than theirs.

"Jump into the pond and swim over to me. We'll have the wather between us an' thim."

The advice was good. It was the only resource left, and they acted upon it instantly.

Down the slippery, shelving rock they slid and splashed into the pool.

It was cold as ice, and made them shiver.

Striking out across it, guided by Mickey's voice, they reached the place, and found him sitting on a shelf of rock, about six feet above the surface of the water, he having reached it by climbing from one projecstion to another.

Adopting the same course, they were soon seated beside him.

The Fire Worshipers made no movement for the space of ten minutes.

Then they commenced to creep forward.

Mickey, who had assumed the position of director of affairs for the time, let them pass over fully one half of the distance.

That was as close as he cared to have them, they being now within five yards.

"Are ye ready?" he whispered.

There was no reply, and Mickey took it that silence meant assent.

"Then give it to the spalpeens, an' aim at the softest part av 'em, their bread-baskets. Fire!"

As Mickey gave the command, and before the Fire Worshipers recovered from their surprise, the rifles flashed.

Bang—bang—bang—bang—bang!

Five reports.

At such close quarters it was almost impossible to miss, and the result was that there were five death cries as five Fire Worshipers went down.

"Hoorah!" shouted Mickey. "Up at them, me bowld byes, an' the battle's ours."

Instantly they were upon their feet, and before the Aztecs recovered from their consternation, they were upon them, hand to hand.

And now the rifle stocks came into play.

The rifles of the Englishmen and Mickey descended upon two heads, and two skulls were broken, and two bodies felt.

This was more than the remaining Fire Worshipers could stand.

There were only three of them left, and in their demoralized condition it was useless to think of standing up against the five on the other side.

They turned and ran, with cries of fear, toward the woods.

The Mexican and Spaniard, hot-headed as they were, sprang after them.

The Englishman, of cooler temperament, knew this would never do, for the Fire Worshipers might skulk in the bushes, or behind trees, and pick them off with arrows or a lance thrust.

And besides, he did not relish being left alone with Mickey and Joe, now that the battle was over.

"Come back!" he shouted. "Let them go. You'll only run into a trap by following."

The Spaniard and Mexican returned.

"You have our thanks, senors, for the service you have rendered us," said the former. "You have saved our lives."

The Mexican, Spaniard, and himself, took cartridges from their pockets and loaded their rifles.

"Bedad, ye'd betther sarve us the same," said Mickey. "Our guns want loadin'."

"We'll see about that presently," said the Englishman, politely. "There's no hurry."

"As much fer us as there is fer yersilves, I'm thinkin'," said Mickey, suspiciously.

The Englishman walked backward a pace or two, and spoke to the Spaniard and Mexican.

They nodded assent.

Then all three suddenly pointed their guns at Mickey and Joe.

And the Englishman said threateningly:

"Throw down your rifles, gentlemen, or we'll blow a hole through both of you!"

CHAPTER VII. THE GIRL AGAIN.

This unexpected move took Joe and Mickey by surprise. For a moment they were so dumbfounded that they could not speak.

"Do you hear?" exclaimed the Englishman. "Put down your guns, or we'll blow you to eternity."

"Bedad, it sames to me this is purty harrud lines, Mis-ther Englishman," grumbled Mickey, who had, by this time, found his voice.

"By no means. We don't choose to have you hunting us—that's all."

"Who the divil wants to hunt yez. If we'd intended ye harrum do ye suppose we'd a-come to give ye warnin' agin the Worshipers, at the risk uv our loives?"

Mickey was well aware that the villainous trio did not know the reason why they rendered that assistance, and that it was to save their own lives.

"There's a good deal in that," returned the Englishman, "and we're very much obliged to you for the favor. We want to make some arrangement with you. Put down the guns, and we'll talk."

"Sure they can't hurt ye; they ain't loaded."

"Put 'em down!"

The tone in which the last words were spoken admitted of no refusal.

Mickey saw that resistance would be madness, and there was nothing for them to do but as they were ordered—and trust to luck.

For two men with empty guns to fight three powerful fellows with loaded and pointed rifles would be sheer folly—it would be suicidal.

"Put down yer shootin'-iron, Joe," groaned Mickey. "Sure they've got us where the hair's short."

Mickey threw his rifle down upon the ground.

Joe gritted his teeth as he did the same.

"Now we'll talk," said the Englishman.

"To ould Nick wid yer blarney. We want no more words wid yez."

"Wait a while. Don't undertake to go till we tell you to, or you'll get a bullet in your back."

"You're a miserable coward, you confounded cockney!" cried Joe, blazing up. "You can talk big when you stand before two unarmed men, three of you, with loaded rifles. Throw down your gun and meet me on equal terms, and I'll take the starch out of you in no time."

"Bully for you, Joe—you're the bye fer me money—talk up to the spalpeen," said Mickey.

"I should advise you to be quiet, bogtrotter," growled the Englishman. "I'm not particularly fond of you, and you may get hurt."

"Fire away," said Mickey. "It'd take more'n wan mon loike versilf to make me kape me mouth shut, bedad."

"Where is your companion; the one you called Tom?" asked the Englishman, addressing Joe.

"That's none of your business," said Joe, curtly.

"If you don't answer, we may shoot."

"Shoot away!"

"Oh, very well, if you don't choose to answer that's your own lookout. There's one question more I'll ask you. Do you intend to leave the mountains?"

"No. We intend to stay until the business that brought us here is completed to our satisfaction."

"What is that business?"

"That is none of your business."

"Oh, very good," said the Englishman, coloring up. "If you don't want to speak I suppose you need not. But I'd like to know how you expect to support life in these mountains. Without your rifle you will starve."

"We'll risk it."

The Englishman turned to his companions, the Spaniard and Mexican.

"They must pursue their search for the treasure," he whispered. "And when they have found it we can easily take from them if they continue unarmed."

The Spaniard and Mexican nodded assent.

The Englishman turned again to Mickey and Joe.

"We don't wish to do you any harm," he said. "But we wish to prevent you from doing us any injury either, venge for what we did to you in the cave. As I told you before, the attack on you was a mistake. We are in want of three desperadoes who murdered a comrade of ours, and we took you for them. Now, although we don't intend to give you your guns, we will supply you with provisions, and if you will come to this spot every day, at nightfall, you will find game killed and waiting for you. When we are ready to leave the mountains, which will be as soon as we have found and killed our men, we will give you back your guns, pistols, and cartridges. Now you may go as soon as you please."

"Thank ye," said Mickey. "Come on, Joe, let's lave. The company av carrion ain't pleasant."

"Good-night," said the Englishman, mockingly.

"We'll see yez again, niver fear," said Mickey.

"With pleasure," laughed the Englishman.

Joe said nothing at all, for he was too full of rage to speak.

They turned away and entered the woods.

"What nixt?" asked Mickey.

"Heaven only knows. Starvation, I think, for I'll never accept food from those three villains."

"No more will I."

"And we must find Tom, if he's alive, before we leave these mountains."

"I'm wid ye there, too. But where'll we be afther lookin' for him?"

"Among the Fire Worshipers."

"Howly St. Patrick. Ye don't think——"

"Let's get away from the vicinity of these three rascals, and then we'll talk."

They walked on in silence for a mile or more.

Then they halted and were about to talk about what it was best to do, when a light figure stepped out from the shadow of a rock and stood before them.

"Howly Moses!" ejaculated Mickey. "It's the gal as warned us yisterday!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A HUMAN VICTIM.

We must now return to Tom, whose fate has been, in a measure, left in doubt.

He, too, plunged with Joe and Mickey into the black pool of the cavern.

And he, too, was sucked by the current into the subterranean passage.

But he was not so fortunate as to catch hold of the projection as Mickey had done, or to have Mickey grasp him and pull him out of the water, as was the case with Joe.

On the contrary, he was whirled through the tunnel like a rocket, first wholly under, and then managing to get his head above water, to catch a breath of air, until he was hurled through the passage into the open air.

More dead than alive, he had no power to guide himself, and at last fainted, in which condition he was thrown—by a different current from that which cast Joe and Mickey upon the island—upon the western bank of the stream.

Here he lay, until in a few minutes he was discovered by a different party of Fire Worshipers from that which had attacked our friends in the cave, and who consequently did not dream that he had companions.

At first the Fire Worshipers thought he was dead, but very soon one of their number detected signs of life.

At this they held a consultation, and as they were in a hurry to move on, it was decided to carry him with them, for purposes which will soon appear.

Taking turns, they carried him away from the stream and some distance through the mountains, when he came to himself.

As soon as the Fire Worshipers found this out they bound his hands and feet in such a manner as to make escape impossible, and then continued onward, still carrying him.

In a few minutes after that they reached a place on the mountain, overlooking a valley, in which a village was situated.

Descending to the village, they passed through it, surrounded by crowds who flocked to see the strange arrival, until they reached the center of the town, opened the door of a house, threw Tom down like a bundle of rags and left him

no word had they addressed to Tom as yet, and he was not whether they could speak a word of English.

It was indeed the case, and they had gone after an interpreter, and presently returned with him.

"How did you come to be in that condition on the shore of the river?" asked the Fire Worshiper, in very broken English.

"I was thrown up by the tide, I suppose."

"But how did you come in the river?"

"Blest if I know," said Tom. "But I think I took a dive through the mountain."

The Fire Worshiper looked as if he did not exactly com-

prehend, and he commenced to ply Tom with questions as to where he came from, what was his business in the mountains, and whether he had any companions.

To all these questions Tom made evasive answers, for he argued that if Joe or Mickey had escaped alive the Fire Worshipers would go on the hunt for them if they knew of their existence.

And as Joe and Mickey were unarmed, they would fall an easy prey to enemies.

Finding that he could get little information from Tom, the Fire Worshiper left him after a while, and Tom was again alone.

And alone he remained all night, not a soul appearing to look at him.

But he knew that he was closely guarded, for all night long he could hear the footsteps of a sentinel as he paced up and down before the door.

In the morning, just at daybreak, several Fire Worshipers entered and carried him out into the open air, where the inhabitants of the whole village, apparently, were gathered.

The men who carried Tom did not stop, but proceeded with him toward the mountain, followed by the crowd.

The procession proceeded in solemn silence, not a word being spoken, and the faces of all being very grave.

Up the mountain side they went, and halted upon the extreme summit.

Here a pile of wood, with light, inflammable brush surrounding it, had been placed.

The procession halted.

Tom now thought it time to speak.

"It's about time I found out what you've brought me here for," he said.

"You shall know," said the man who had acted as interpreter the night before. "Our God, the sun, demands a victim, and he must look upon him the instant his eyes are cast upon the world. You are to be thrown upon the pile, and the moment the sun appears the wood will be ignited and your body consumed. Thus will our God be propitiated, and look with favor upon his people."

At a signal from him Tom was cast upon the pile.

He struggled desperately, but was firmly held and bound upon the pile.

At that instant the sun showed his upper disc above the horizon.

"Fire the pile!" said the Fire Worshiper, solemnly. "Our God shall look upon his victim in the midst of flame and smoke."

And a man with a blazing torch stepped forward.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TABLES TURNED.

"It's the gurrul as warned us yisterday," said Mickey Free.

Joe started forward, and was about to speak, when the girl interrupted him.

"Your companion is in the most awful danger," she whispered.

"Ha!" exclaimed Joe. "Do you know anything about Tom?"

"I do not know his name, but he is the one I saw with you yesterday when I warned you."

"What is his danger?"

"My people have got him in their power."

"Howly Moses!" ejaculated Mickey.

"How did they capture him?" asked Joe.

"They found him on the bank of the river where it comes out from under the mountain."

"Bejabers, I'm bettin' he showed foight," said Mickey.

"No, he did not; he was insensible. But they brought him back to life for a terrible purpose."

"What was that purpose?" asked Joe, breathlessly.

"To sacrifice him to their god."

Joe and Mickey caught their breath.

"Where is he now?" demanded Joe.

"At their village in the mountains. He will be sacrificed in the morning at sunrise."

"Great heaven! How can we save him?"

"I fear that is impossible."

"We'll do it, or die thryin'!" cried Mickey.

"We will!" cried Joe heartily. "Can you lead us to the spot, Miss — Excuse me, I do not know your name."

"I am called Lola. Yes, I can lead you to the spot, but you can do nothing. There are so many of the Fire Worshipers, and he is well guarded."

"We'll have a fight for it, at any rate."

"But you have no weapons."

Joe and Mickey glanced at each other in consternation. It was true. They were without guns. What, then, could they do?

"Joe," said Mickey, "we're in a divil of a stew."

"True enough. What shall we do?"

"We must be afther goin' back to where thim there spalpeens are, an' gittin' the guns, at all risks."

"Can we find them?"

"I don't belave they'll have since enough to lave the place where we left thim."

"Come on," said Joe, starting off.

"Howld on!" said Mickey. "Me sprig av shamrock, will ye be afther findin' yez here whin we git back?"

"Yes," said Lola; "I will wait."

"Then off we go, Joe, dear. Wish us good luck, me darlint."

"I do," said the girl earnestly.

"Sure that's half the battle. Now, Joe, come along, an' we'll give thim spalpeens ballywhack widout salt or seasonin'."

They walked away, and Lola retreated to the shadow of the rock to await their return.

"She's a beauty," said Mickey, when they were out of hearing.

"She is," said Joe. "It strikes me her skin isn't as dark as that of the rest of the Fire Worshipers I've seen."

"It don't look so. I'll foind out all about her the next time I see her."

"Hurry, Mickey, hurry!"

"Ain't I going as fast as me legs'll carry me. Howly Moses!"

His foot caught in a running vine, and he was hurled headlong.

"The skin's tuck off me shins intirely," he groaned, as he arose to his feet. "What a bastely country this is to be sure! An' if we iver relase Tom an' foind the treasure, I'll be makin' tracks out av it in a hurry."

"On—on, Mickey."

But, although he groaned and grumbled, he increased his speed, until they neared the spot where they had left the Spaniard, the Mexican and the Englishman.

Mickey crept forward and peered into the glade.

"They're not here," he whispered.

"They have not gone far. We must hunt them up."

"Faith, it'll be loike luckin for a nadle in a haystack, I'm thinkin'."

"We must take our chances. We may stumble upon them."

They walked off towards the south.

Having gone cautiously forward for a few yards in that direction, Joe stopped.

"Do you remember the small glade we passed when we were coming from the river?" he asked.

"Sure I do."

"That would be just the spot where they would likely hit upon as a camping-place when they left here."

"Bejabers, ye're roight! Ye've a good head on ye, Joe. Can ye foind the spot?"

"I think so."

"Then be pilot."

Joe turned back to the glade, and then walked cautiously through the woods in the direction of the river.

About halfway to the river there was a glade much smaller than the first, but suitable in every respect for camping.

"We are close upon it," said Joe, in a whisper.

"Hadn't we better be goin' around an' come upon 'em from the river? They will not be thinkin' av danger from that point, an' we'll be loikely to run afoul av the guard."

Joe saw the wisdom of this, and they swerved from their course, going completely around the glade, and then, turning back, came upon it from the other side.

Creeping up, they reached the edge of the glade, and peered through the bushes.

By the light of the stars they could dimly discern two men lying on the ground, and could hear the sound of their breathing.

"Wan av thim is on watch," whispered Mickey.

"How are we to know where he is?"

"Kane still a bit. Mebbe he'll make a noise, or show himself."

Still as death they lay, and watched and listened. Suddenly there was heard the sound of some one changing his position in the bushes on the opposite side of the glade, and then the figure of a man came into view.

It was the Englishman, as they could tell from his heavy, thick-set figure.

He came into the glade, looked around for a moment, and then yawned sleepily.

"I think I'll sit down and rest," he said. "I never did like to stand like a spook, keeping watch while there's no danger. What's the good of it, anyhow! The Fire Worshipers 'll not return after the sound clubbing we gave them."

He sat down on the ground, with his back against a tree.

Mickey Free chuckled.

"We'll be all roight moighty soon, Joe," he whispered. "He'll soon be slapin'."

Mickey's words were verified.

The Englishman nodded several times, and roused himself with a start. Then he seemed to give up trying to keep awake, for his head sank down upon his breast, and he slept contentedly, with his back against a tree, and his rifle resting across his knees.

"Glory to heaven!" whispered Mickey.

They commenced to creep around the glade.

The circuit was completed without arousing the Englishman, and they arrived within reach of him as he leaned against the tree.

"I'd knock the spalpeen on the head with a club," whispered Mickey, in Joe's ear, "but the noise might wake up the other two divils."

"Then what is to be done?"

"I'll tell yez. I'll rache around the tree, an' git him by the throat, an' pull his head around on this side av the tree. Are yez ready?"

"I am."

"Then I'll give it to the omadhoun!"

At the word Mickey clutched the Englishman by the throat with both hands, while Joe caught his legs, and between them both they wrenched him around till his back was almost broken by the tree.

In such a position he could not exert his strength, and his struggles were of no avail.

Mickey clutched his throat until his fingers met in the flesh.

The Englishman's face became black, and his struggles gradually ceased.

When he became perfectly quiet, and lay passive, Mickey relaxed his grip.

"He's fixed good enough," he whispered.

"Is he dead?"

"Niver a bit; but he'll lay still till we have settled the hash of the other two."

Possessing himself of the Englishman's rifle, Mickey handed it to Joe, and caught up a short, stout stick that was lying on the ground.

"We'll crape up an' knock the other two on the head," he whispered. "Not hard enough to kill 'em, but to knock the sinces out av 'em."

Softly they walked across the intervening space.

Joe selected his man, and raised this rifle. Mickey stood over his man and raised his club.

All was ready.

Whack!

The rifle and club came down simultaneously, causing but one sound.

There was a groan from the Mexican and Spaniard, but no movement, except a convulsive shiver.

"We'll be afther tyin' them up," said Mickey quietly.

Taking out his knife, Mickey cut strips from their clothing, and firmly bound their hands and feet.

Then he did the same for the Englishman, who was insensible, and removing the man's strong belt, lashed firmly to the tree.

Returning to the Mexican and Spaniard, they were to the edge of the woods, and lashed firmly by their hands to trees a short distance apart.

"They'll be here when we want them ag'in, I'm thin u'," said Mickey. "Now, we'll be lookin' for the rifles."

They were found on the ground where the men had lain, and then the pockets of the three men were emptied of the cartridges.

There were six rifles altogether. These, with the pistols and knives that were found on the men, made Tom and Joe walking arsenals.

Shouldering their rifles, they started on their return to Lola.

Mickey groaned under the weight of the rifles, and at last declared that he would carry them no further.

The rifles were deposited in the bushes in such a way that no one would be likely to find them, and then they started on again, with only a gun apiece, but keeping the pistols, and soon reached the rock where they had left Lola.

She came to meet them as they approached.

"Did you succeed?" she asked.

"Sure, we did," said Mickey. "We ginerally succade, Joe an' I do, when we undertake a thing."

"You will have to work hard if you succeed in getting your friend out of the power of the Fire Worshipers," said Lola.

"Let us start," said Joe.

"Yes," replied Lola, "we must start at once if we wish to reach the village before morning."

She led the way at a brisk walk in that direction, and the two young men followed her.

CHAPTER X.

A CLOSE SHAVE.

"Loly," said Mickey, before they had gone far, "it seems to me it's very quare to foind ye goin' back on yer own people."

"Whom do you call my own people?" asked the girl quietly.

"The Fire Worshipers, av coorse."

"They are not my people."

"How the divil do yez make that out?"

"I am not of their blood at all."

"Ye don't say!"

"Yes, I do. I am an American girl. My father, my mother and myself lived on an immense cattle ranch in Texas. One day, when I was about six years old, the Comanches swooped down upon us, killed my father and mother and the servants, and took me with them to the mountains. Shortly after that I was sold to the Fire Worshipers, and I have lived with them ever since."

"Do they trate ye well, Loly?"

"Yes, they are kind enough to me. I have no desire to leave them now; but they shall not sacrifice one of my countrymen, if I can help it."

Mickey, with his customary impudence, continued to ply the girl with questions, to all of which she replied readily.

All this time they were going forward rapidly, but it was hard work climbing the mountains, and so much time was consumed that it was daylight when they came in sight of the village.

Lola peered down into the valley.

"We are too late!" she exclaimed. "Look!"

The Fire Worshipers were in motion, and a crowd of them were leaving the village and advancing up the mountainside.

"What does that mean?" asked Joe.

"It means that they are coming to a place further up, on the very summit of which they will burn your friend."

"Where is the place where the sacrifice is to be made?"

"Close by. I can lead you to it, and we can secret ourselves before they arrive."

"Lead on."

Lola led the way toward the summit of the mountain, and they concealed themselves within fifty yards of the sacrificial altar.

In a few minutes the Fire Worshipers appeared, with their victim in their midst.

Tom was led toward the pile of wood.

Mickey fingered his rifle nervously.

"Don't shoot yet," whispered Joe. "Something may happen to save Tom."

But it seemed that he was doomed, for he was carried to the pile, thrown on it and bound. Then the man with the torch stepped forward. In another instant the pile would be ablaze and Tom would be lost.

They raised their rifles, Joe aiming at the man who held the torch.

In another instant there would have sounded two reports, when a voice cried:

"Hold!"

The tone was one of authority, and the man with the torch paused.

A tall man, gorgeously attired, accompanied by three

others, had just ascended the mountain from the other side, and stood gazing on the scene with folded arms.

"It is Loyola, the chief of all the Fire Worshipers," whispered Lola.

Loyola advanced.

"I demand the victim," he said.

"For what reason?" asked the priests.

"Because all other sacrifices must give way to that which must be made to-day at noon on the Fire Mountain. We have no victim. I demand this man for this sacrifice."

The Fire Worshipers murmured, but the priests assented. They advanced to the pile of wood, unbound Tom, and delivered him to Loyola.

Two long cords were fastened to Tom's wrists, and the ends given to two of Loyola's men, one on each side.

The crowd of Fire Worshipers who had brought Tom up the mountain returned to their village in the opposite direction from that in which Loyola and his men had gone, leaving Joe and Mickey and Lola alone on the mountain.

"Now's our chance," said Joe. "We'll follow those fellows and take Tom."

"They are four to two," said Lola anxiously.

"Hoo!" snorted Mickey. "Two av us can whip any four Worshipers that live."

Lola seemed uncertain about that.

"I must go back to the village," she said. "They will be out searching for me if I do not return soon."

"We must see you again," said Joe, regarding her admiringly.

Lola blushed.

"Perhaps," she said, and then walking swiftly down the mountain, was lost to view in the direction of the village.

"Bejabers! Loly's a whole team," said Mickey. "It's a pity she shud live all her life among these fire-eaters, Joe."

"She shall not, if I can help it, Mickey. 'Come, we must follow Loyola.'"

Following the path, which was winding, they hurried on until Mickey suddenly stopped, and whispered:

"There the spalpeens are—roight ahead av us."

CHAPTER XI.

"AN ANGEL IN PETTICOATS."

The Fire Worshipers were going leisurely along.

"Let's go around an' come in ahead av thim," said Mickey.

His advice was acted upon, and they made a wide detour at a rapid walk, coming into the path a quarter of a mile lower down the mountain.

They were none too soon, for the Fire Worshipers came in sight almost as soon as they had taken their positions.

"Make ready, Mickey," whispered Joe. "We'll plug the two fellows that are leading Tom. Fire!"

Crack! Crack!

It was impossible to miss, and the two Fire Worshipers went down.

Hardly had the cracks sounded out when Joe and Mickey sprang upon Loyola and the other man.

Before they could hardly realize what had happened the stock of Joe's rifle struck Loyola's head and he fell like a log, while the other, before he could defend himself, went down under a blow from Mickey's shillelah.

With the cords dangling from his wrists Tom stood looking from side to side in amazement, hardly able to comprehend what had happened.

"Joe! Mickey!" he exclaimed at last. "Alive!"

"Sure we are, Tom, dear," returned Mickey, with a grin.

"Were ye consated enough to think yerself the only man that could come out from the bowels av the earth alive?"

Then Tom's bonds were cut, and there was a general hand-shaking all around.

"What shall be done with these Fire Worshipers?" asked Joe.

"Two of 'em are dead," said Mickey. "Howly St. Patrick! If Loyola ain't covered wid diamonds."

And so he was. His belt was thickly studded with them, and a kind of band that he wore around his head had in it many gems of monstrous size.

"To the victor belongs the spoils," ejaculated Mickey, tearing all the stones from their settings.

They started off towards the spot where they had left the rascally trio bound, leaving Loyola and one Fire Worshiper lying insensible beside their dead companions.

If Loyola recovered the chase after Tom, Joe and Mickey would be hot, to recover the lost jewels.

Loyola was a tremendous hater, and he would never rest until he had their blood.

Hurrying on they came close to the spot where the three villains were left bound to the trees.

The voice of the Englishman arrested them.

He was speaking pleadingly almost prayerfully.

Joe, Mickey and Tom crept up and peered through the bushes, but their positions were such that only Mickey obtained a fair view.

"Who is the rascal speaking to?" whispered Joe.

"To an angel in petticoats," whispered Mickey in reply.

CHAPTER XII.

CLARA.

"Hark!" continued Mickey. "The spalpeen av an Englishman is afther beggin' ag'in."

Although Mickey only could see what was going on, the Englishman's words could be heard by all of them.

The tones were pleading, very unlike his usual gruff and masterful manner.

"In the name of humanity, untie us, miss," he was saying. "We have been robbed, and nearly murdered, and we will die of exhaustion if we are left here much longer."

The girl seemed to hesitate.

"I've just been thinking whether I ought to or not, and I haven't made up my mind yet. Don't bluster, or you'll lose everything, for I shall go away and leave you alone."

She walked up nearly within reach of the Englishman.

"Will you swear that the story you told me is true?" she asked.

"By all my hopes of heaven."

"Then I'll release you. And I tell you plainly that I believe I am doing wrong."

"Howld hard."

The knife dropped from the girl's hand, and she started back in alarm.

Looking around for the person who spoke, she appeared surprised.

Her face assumed an expression of bewilderment.

Mickey completed her astonishment by stepping through the bushes and standing before her.

"Bedad, an' it's moighty glad I am to see ye, miss, for it gives me pleasure to meet a gurrul of me own counthry."

The girl smiled.

At this Tom and Joe, who had been amused listeners to Mickey, came tumbling out of the bushes.

The girl lost her self-confident air when speaking to the Englishman, and blushed.

The young men, too, seemed to be embarrassed.

"Wud ye tell us yer name, miss," said Mickey.

"My name is Clara Lord."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Joe.

"What is it?" said Clara. "The name is a common one enough, I am sure."

"That's so. And perhaps you are not the person I was thinking of, after all."

"Perhaps not. Of whom were you thinking?"

"Answer me one question first. Were you ever at Bedford Seminary, in the State of New York?"

It was now Clara's turn to be surprised.

"How did you know that?" she asked.

"Then it is true, is it?"

"It is."

"Thank you. Now, another question, if you please. Is your father's name Thomas Lord?"

"It is. Do you know him?"

"I know that he came to Mexico prospecting," said Joe cautiously. "Mickey Free, here, was his servant in the City of Mexico."

"Sure, I was," said Mickey, with a warning glance at Joe.

He was certain that she did not know her father was dead, and he did not wish to shock her by telling her of it abruptly.

He turned to the Englishman.

"Sure, an' I'm going to untie you, and if you attempt to run look out."

He untied the thongs that bound the Englishman to the tree.

Then he did the same for the Spaniard and Mexican, who were scowling viciously.

They let them go with the promise that if they were starving they could come to that place and find food and drink.

They then turned to Clara, and asked her how she came there.

"My story is soon told," said Clara. "I did not hear from my father for a long time, and I left the seminary at Bedford and went down to New York to see if any of his old friends there knew anything of him. I was disappointed, for no one had heard anything of him since he had reached Mexico. There was a party of three about leaving for here, and I asked leave to go with them. They consented, and only a week ago while I was away from the camp, they were attacked by the Fire Worshipers and massacred. When I returned I found them dead and horribly mutilated, and I have been wandering about the country ever since, getting my food with my rifle. And now that I have told you my story, let me hear about my father."

Tom, Joe and Mickey cast covert glances at each other.

Who should break the dreadful news of her father's death to the poor girl?

Each dreaded the task.

Just then, however, Mickey exclaimed:

"Here comes Loyola and an army of Fire Worshipers a-tryin' to take us by surprise. Cut and run!"

Had they been alone, they might have held their own with their enemies, but with Clara along it was different.

They dashed into the woods, Clara after them and the young men closed around her, shielding her from any mishap.

But the Fire Worshipers were gaining fast.

Something had to be done, as it was beginning to look hopeless.

Suddenly they emerged from the woods, and came to a stop at the very brink of a precipice.

Mickey, who was in advance, saw at a glance that this ledge was their only hope.

The ledge was about twenty feet up the side of the precipice, which, above it, ascended perpendicularly.

But the ascent to the ledge was a little slanting.

At it they rushed, Tom and Joe assisting Clara, and catching hold of the bushes that grew in the crevices and clinging fast to the projections in the rock, managed to reach the ledge just as the Fire Worshipers ran howling from the woods.

"Down wid yez!" cried Mickey, falling down behind a rock, and forcing Clara with him, as a flight of arrows shivered themselves against the rocky wall. "Git ready! They're going to storm the fort. Fight like Old Nick, an' if the Fire Worshipin' spalpeens git us, make 'em pay dearly for ivery loife they take."

CHAPTER XIII.

BESIEGED.

The Fire Worshipers, led by Loyola, who was wild with rage at the injuries he had received from the hated Americans, did not hesitate an instant.

Relying upon their superior numbers, they charged boldly up the cliff towards the ledge.

But they reckoned without their host.

Crack! Crack! Crack! Crack!

Four rifles spoke, Clara's being among the number, and four of the Fire Worshipers rolled howling down the ledge.

Two lay still, as dead as posts, and two dragged themselves into the woods, badly wounded.

But the Fire Worshipers were not checked.

On they came, thinking the rifles were empty, and there was no further danger.

But they had forgotten the pistols.

In the face of the deadly fire of those the Fire Worshipers recoiled.

All but Loyola, who, in his wild and ungovernable rage, did not note that he was alone, and bounded up the ascent, until he reached the edge of the ledge.

As he grasped the ledge, and was about to draw himself over, Mickey presented a pistol at his head.

An instant later, and it would have been all over with the Aztec chief.

But Tom interfered.

"Don't shoot!" he cried. "That charge of his was splendid. He is too brave a man to have his brains blown out when he can't defend himself."

At these words Mickey changed his tactics.

Taking his pistol by the muzzle he dealt a stunning blow with the butt of it upon Loyola's head.

As quick as thought his grip relaxed, and he fell, rolling over and over, until he struck the bottom of the cliff, and lay insensible upon the rocks below.

There was a terrible cry from the edge of the woods, where the Fire Worshipers had retreated, and a wild rush was again made towards the cliff.

"Don't shoot!" cried Tom, as Joe and Mickey presented their pistols, all the chambers of which were not discharged. "They are after Loyola. Let the poor devils have him."

In an instant the Fire Worshipers had surrounded Loyola, lifted him up and ran back into the woods out of sight.

"Hurrah!" shouted Mickey, slinging his cap into the air, "Let 'em come ag'in. We'll lick all the Fire Worshipers in creation."

But the Fire Worshipers evidently had enough of it.

Nothing more was seen of them for some time, and Mickey, thinking they were driven off, and becoming careless, incautiously put his head above the boulders to look around.

Whiz!

An arrow flew past his head, and was shattered on the rocks behind him.

"Howly smoke!" ejaculated Mickey, rubbing his head and dodging down.

"You must be more cautious," said Tom.

"Bedad, I'll not be lookin' ag'in, sur. I've no fancy fer havin' me head bored through wid an auger loike that."

Matters had now assumed a serious shape.

The precipice behind them seemed to cut off escape in that direction. In front the way was blocked by the Fire Worshipers, through whose ranks they could not cut their way. And even if they did, Clara would soon be overtaken.

What was to be done? To remain was to die of hunger and thirst; and to attempt to pass the Fire Worshipers was almost certain death.

Clearly their case was desperate.

They talked it over, but could arrive at no conclusion which promised relief, and to make matters worse Clara began to ask about her father.

The young men perceived that she was determined to know all about him, and that they must either tell a downright lie or let her know the truth.

Joe decided upon the latter course.

He thought that, with the imminent danger with which they were threatened, she would not have time to dwell so much upon her grief.

In gentle tones he told her of her father's death in Mexico, and of their mission to recover the lost treasure which was what had brought them among the Fire Worshipers.

For a while after the recital Clara sat as if stunned by the awful blow that had fallen upon her.

The father, whom she had come so far to see, was dead, and her journey had been in vain.

It seemed to her at first as if her heart must burst with anguish, and then she was mercifully relieved by a flow of tears.

For a while she wept freely, and when she stopped crying Joe spoke about the treasure.

"I don't care anything about that," she said sadly.

"You'll feel different after a while," said Joe kindly; "but we were obliged to speak about it, for part of it is yours."

"When we foind it, bedad," put in Mickey; "an' sure I'm thinkin' it'll be a long toime first."

"It will belong to you when you do find it," said Clara. "Of course I could not think of taking it, after you have had all the trouble and danger."

We can settle that when we find it," said Tom. "There is no use wrangling about it now. The Fire Worshipers are in front of us, and if we don't look out we might not even have the chance to look for it."

"You had better leave me. You can save yourselves by dashing through them."

"Don't say that again," said Joe, more sternly than he had yet spoken. "Do you know it's an insult to ask a man to desert a girl when she's in danger?"

Nothing more was seen of the Fire Worshipers, although they knew they were in the edge of the woods, and occasionally an arrow would be shot against the rocks as a reminder.

Darkness came; but it brought no hope of relief, for they could not steal away from the ledge without discovery.

The sky clouded over, and it became very dark.

"We'd better be movin'," said Mickey suddenly.

"Don't joke," said Tom sternly.

"Niver a bit am I jokin'," said Mickey. "I want the whole av yez to give me yer belts."

Wondering what he could want of them, they all took them off and handed them to him.

Tying them securely together, he made a slip-noose in the end.

The Fire Worshipers could not see the ledge in the darkness, and he stood upright and flung the noose upward.

Down it came again and again, and at last it caught and held fast.

The next moment Mickey seized the rope, climbed up hand over hand, and disappeared in the darkness.

In a little while he returned and told Tom and Joe everything was all right. Clara insisted so strongly that they go and leave her that they consented finally, on promising Clara they would be back in a little while.

Not long after they had gone Clara heard a noise, and on looking around was terrified at seeing the three villains at her side—the Englishman, the Mexican, and the Spaniard.

CHAPTER XIV.

THREE VILLAINS CAST LOTS.

"Come along with us, my darling beauty," repeated the Englishman, the ugly smile deepening upon his villainous features. "We'll tame you before we've done with you, I'll warrant."

Taken entirely by surprise, for a moment Clara gave way to the influence of fear, and it seemed to her that she was going to faint, for everything grew dark for an instant.

But since she had been alone in the mountains she had become used to danger, and it could not daunt her long.

In a second she recovered her presence of mind, and resolved to battle for her freedom.

"What do you want?" demanded Clara.

"We want you to go with us, my beauty."

"Then want will be your master."

The Spaniard and Mexican chuckled and grinned with fiendish glee. How could a slight girl like her successfully defend herself against the three of them?

"Now, my pretty dear," continued the Englishman, with a fiendish leer. "Come along. We want you."

Although her case seemed hopeless, Clara had no idea of submitting without a struggle.

Her rifle was lying at her feet.

Stooping down, she seized it before they could prevent her, and, cocking it quick as lightning, presented it at the Englishman's heart.

"Keep back!" she cried, in a clear, ringing voice.

The Englishman recoiled.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, "would you kill me?"

"As quickly as I would kill a snake. Oho, you villain, it isn't as easy as you thought to capture a girl, is it?"

She had the advantage of them, for although they were three to one, she was the only one who was armed.

The Englishman changed his tactics.

"We were only in fun," he said.

"I don't like such fun as that."

"We wouldn't harm a hair of your head for the world."

"Wouldn't you? Actions speak louder than words. I don't intend to give you the chance, at any rate. Take yourselves off!"

The three rascals hesitated.

"Do you hear?" exclaimed Clara. "I'll give you one minute and no more, and if you're not gone by that time I shall fire!"

"Don't!" whined the Englishman in terror. "We didn't want you. We were only funning, but we wanted the rifle to kill game with. We'll go."

"Then away with you—begone!"

She made a significant gesture with the rifle, and the three rascals took the hint and ran across the glade like frightened sheep, disappearing in the woods on the opposite side.

Clara heaved a sigh of relief.

"What cowards they are," she laughed. "Who would have thought a poor girl like me could have set them running?"

She sat down, with her back to the tree, and fell into a reverie, her rifle lying across her lap, to be ready, in case of an attack.

But she committed an error.

Had she gone to the center of the glade before she sat down, she would have been safe enough.

But unfortunately she so despised the contemptible foe that she neglected to take this ordinary precaution, and remained by the edge of the woods, with her back to the trees.

The Englishman, Spaniard, and Mexican retired just far enough to be invisible to her, but they could see her as they peered through the leaves, crouching low down and keeping hidden among the underbrush.

They saw her sit down, and noticed how careless was her attitude.

"We must have the rifle," whispered the Spaniard.

"And the girl, too," muttered the Englishman, his eyes gleaming fiercely.

"I can get both," whispered the Mexican.

"Then do it."

"I will. Wait here."

Throwing himself flat upon the ground, he commenced creeping around the glade, like a snake.

Nearer and nearer he crept.

He completed the circuit of the glade and then commenced worming his way directly toward the unconscious girl.

The Englishman and Spaniard could not see him, but they held their breaths in anxious expectation.

Clara was thinking of her father—dead and buried in a strange land, among strangers, and was weeping silently as she thought that she should never see him again.

Suddenly and without warning the rifle was snatched from her lap and flung aside, and she was a prisoner of the Mexican. Her cries echoed through the woods, but no one heard them except the wild animals and the Spaniard and Englishman, who came running up when their companion had effected the capture of the girl.

"Ho—ho!" chuckled the Englishman, with a fiendish chuckle. "How her feathers droop."

"You brute!" cried Clara, with a gasp.

"Call me pet names, dearest," laughed the Englishman. "It will probably do you good, and don't hurt me."

"Why do you come back and sneak upon me in this way?"

"Didn't I tell you we wanted your rifle?"

"Take it, then, and begone!"

"Of course we'll take it. And we'll do more—we'll take you with it, my tigerish beauty."

He stooped and picked up the rifle, appropriating it himself. The pistol that was upon the ground he handed to the Spaniard, and taking the remaining pistol from Clara's belt, he stuck it in that of the Mexican.

"Now we're armed again," he said, with an air of satisfaction. "And if those young fools make their appearance we'll give 'em as good as they send."

"I suppose you will leave me to myself, now that you have got all you want?" said Clara.

"Not much, my pretty spitfire! Senor Spaniard, untie that sash from her waist."

The Spaniard did so.

"What are you going to do?" demanded Clara, becoming seriously alarmed.

"We're going to take you with us, and tame you down."

"You'll find that hard work," returned the girl, defiantly.

"Will ye? I doubt it. I think I know a way. Tie her up."

He held her hands together while the Spaniard bound them. Then the Englishman took hold of the end of the sash.

"Forward, march!" he exclaimed.

He walked forward. Clara would not submit, and held back. The consequence was that she was dragged several steps, severely injuring her wrists.

The Mexican and Spaniard chuckled fiendishly.

"Oh, you fiends!" said the tortured girl. "As surely as I live, you shall dearly pay for this."

"Nonsense," sneered the Englishman. "Come, are you going to walk? If not, we'll drag you along the whole distance, I swear."

"It's pretty hard work," he continued, to the Mexican, in Spanish. "Suppose we hitch teams?"

The Mexican took hold of the sash and gave it a sudden jerk.

It forced a cry of pain from poor Clara.

"Oh, you brutes!" she exclaimed.

"Then come along without force!" hissed the Englishman. "See here. I warn you once more that we'll stand no fooling."

Clara saw that resistance at that time would do no good, and only increase her suffering.

"Don't hurt me any more," she said. "I will go with you."

"That's sensible," chuckled the Englishman. "I told you I knew a way to tame you. It's working first-rate already."

The Mexican scowled at the delay, and muttered something in Spanish to the effect that they had better leave the place or the young Americans and the Irishman would be upon them the first thing they knew, and they would have to fight for it.

This was enough for the Englishman, who feared the young men, no matter what, in bravado, he might say to the contrary.

"Come along," he said, gruffly to Clara, "and mind you don't go to kicking up any of your tantrums, or it will be the worse for you."

They marched off through the woods, the Mexican in the advance, the Spaniard bringing up the rear, and the Englishman, leading Clara by the sash, in the center.

In this order they went on and on, going higher up into the mountains, the way becoming rockier and more hilly every moment.

After a while the Mexican paused.

"This must be the spot," he muttered.

"It is," said the Englishman. "Scrape away the brush-wood."

The Spaniard went to a heap of brush that had been thrown carelessly against the side of a cliff, and kicked it aside with his foot.

A circular opening was disclosed.

"Here we are," said the Englishman. "Go in."

Stooping down, the Mexican entered the hole, and the Spaniard followed him.

"Now it's our turn," said the Englishman to Clara. "Go ahead, my beauty."

"I'll not enter that place," said Clara, turning pale and drawing back.

"Oh, won't you?" hissed the Englishman. "I say you will, if I have to drag you through the entrance head foremost."

Clara uttered a groan of despair, but knew it would be useless to resist.

For an instant she held back, and then, as she was about being thrown off her feet, gave in, and, with a sob of despair, followed him, half bent, through the opening.

She found herself in a circular chamber, a cave about twenty feet in diameter, hollowed by the hand of nature out of the rock.

Getting between her and the entrance, so that it was impossible for her to escape, the three rascals sat down, and whispered among each other for a few minutes, the import of which she realized when the Englishman turned to her, and with a leer, said:

"We are going to draw lots for you."

The girl felt herself becoming deathly sick.

Great heaven! Was she to be the object of the gambling of these three repulsive wretches?

"I see you don't like it," chuckled the Englishman, while the Spaniard and Mexican grinned, showing disgustingly their yellow teeth.

The three villains then proceeded with their devilish scheme, and suddenly the Englishman sprang to his feet with a shout of triumph, and started toward the girl.

"You're mine!" he yelled. "You beautiful little tigress, you're mine. I've won! And thus I'll claim and tame you!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE TREASURE.

Tom, Joe, and Mickey, when they left Clara, hurried forward toward the cave which Lola had told them of.

"Faith, I'm beginnin' to think we'll niver foind the tray-sure," ejaculated Mickey. "It's very much loike lookin' for a nadle in a haystack, jist, for the whole country seems to be honeycombed wid caves, jist."

"Don't give it up, Mick," responded Tom. "If we search 'em all we're sure to find it."

"Bedad, it'll take us till the day av judgment, mebbe, to do that same."

"I shouldn't wonder if the treasure is in the very cave we're going to search to-day."

"Sure, we've made something, onyhow, by comin' out among the bloody Worshipers," said Mickey, with a grin. "Old Loyoly's diamonds must be wurruth a hape av money, an' they're safe in me pockets, be the token."

"Be careful you keep 'em there, Mick. The old fellow'll knock you on the head yet, if you don't look out."

"Faith, we'd be no more'n aven thin. I've knocked the old thafe's brains out wonst, bedad."

"Hurry on!" exclaimed Joe, impatiently. "Talk less and walk the faster."

"Me legs work the faster whin me tongue's a-waggin'," said Mickey, with a grin.

"Lola said that the other cave is about a hundred yards to the west," said Tom. "Pace it off, Mickey."

The distance was paced, and they came upon a heap of brushwood.

"Kick it away!" said Joe.

The brush was removed and the entrance was exposed.

It was so low that they were obliged to fall flat on the ground and creep through it.

"Och, murder!" growled Micky, as his head struck against a projection in the rocky ceiling. "I'll not nade Loyoly to knock me brains out if we're afther stayin' in this bastely place much longer."

The cave was long and narrow, and there seemed to be no crevice.

"To old Nick wid the traysure!" exclaimed Mickey, dolefully. "I don't believe we'll ever be foindin' it at all—at all."

"Let's be going," said Joe. "It's plain we'll find nothing that we want in this den."

They moved toward the entrance, when Mickey suddenly pitched forward and fell, his foot having struck a projection in the floor.

"Howly St. Patrick!" he groaned. "First it's me head an' then it's me fut, an' I've knocked me toes off intirely."

He caught his foot in his hands and commenced groaning.

"Halloo!" exclaimed Tom. "You've shaken the foundations, Mickey. As I live, you've kicked part of the floor away."

"The dickens ye say!" exclaimed Mickey, starting to his feet. "Then it hadn't growed solid, bedad! Let's look."

A part of the rock was certainly detached from its position. Observing it more intently, they saw that it was a boulder about a foot in diameter that had been jammed into a hollow so tight that it resembled a part of the floor itself.

And underneath it was a bed of leaves.

Tom and Joe were turning away when Mickey stopped them in an instant by saying:

"Howld on, boys. Them leaves niver growed in that same spot. They must have been placed there by human hands."

"Well, what of it?"

"An' thim same hands moight have been the hands of Mither Lord."

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, as he realized what Mickey was driving at.

"An' if he put 'em there ye may bet yer bottom dollar the traysure's underneath 'em."

No sooner had the words left his lips than they were down upon their hands and knees scattering the leaves.

"Faith, here's something!" ejaculated Mickey. "It's roight as, bedad. We've found the traysure, or I'm a bloody Wipeen."

He held up a package, wrapped in oiled silk.

"Open it!" said Joe, excitedly.

Mickey carefully removed the wrappings.

He unfolded the package.

A cry of wonder burst from them.

Diamonds of incredible size lay in a heap before their eyes.

For a moment they gazed upon the immense riches that lay before them, unable to speak.

Then Tom exclaimed:

"Boys, we're all rich!"

"And Clara, too, the darlin'," cried Mickey.

"Certainly. She must have her share."

"An' now we'll be afther gittin' out av this bastely country."

"As quick as the horses will take us. We've got what we came for. Let's go back after Clara and start to-day."

"Not yet," said Tom, decidedly. "I'll not leave Lola with the Fire Worshipers. When I go she shall go with me."

"Sure yer roight, Tom," said Mickey. "We'll stay till we see Loyola agin. She's done us moighty good sarvice an' it'll not be roight to desart her. We're wid ye. But what'll we be afther doin' with the diamonds?"

"Keep them in our pockets, of course."

"D'ye believe in the doctrine av chances?"

"What are you driving at?"

"I'll be afther tellin' yez. Ye see, Tom's been captured by the Worshipers wanst, an' as lightnin' niver stroikes twice in wan place, he'll not be tuk by the spalpeens agin. So, if ayther av us is tuk by the divils, it'll be you or mesilf, Joe. So I say let Tom have the diamonds an' them I tuk from Loyoly."

Willing to please Mickey, this plan was assented to, and all the diamonds were securely stowed away in Tom's pockets.

They then left the cave and commenced the march back to where they had left Clara.

Of course she was not there when they arrived.

They looked at each other in alarm.

"Here's the divil to pay again!" ejaculated Mickey. "As soon as we're out av wan scrape we're afther gittin' into another. Ooch, murther!"

Whiz—whiz—whiz—whiz!

A yell arose from the easterly edge of the glade, a shower of arrows flew around them, and a score of Fire Worshipers, led by Loyola, sprang out of the woods.

To fight so many on even terms would be madness.

"Run!" shouted Tom. "For your lives, boys, run! Away!"

CHAPTER XVI

A FEARFUL LEAP.

Flight was the only hope of safety, and slim enough it was at that.

Away they dashed through the woods, the Fire Worshipers, thirsting for their blood, in full hue and cry behind.

Yell after yell arose.

Every second an arrow would come whizzing past them. At last one grazed Mickey's shoulder, drawing the blood.

He uttered an involuntary cry.

"Hit, Mickey?" panted Joe, who was next to him.

"Jist a graze," gasped Mickey.

"They're at too close quarters. We must keep 'em at a distance, or we'll all be plugged, one by one."

"Bedad, that's aisier said nor done. I'm goin' as fast as me legs'll carry me."

"So are we all. But we must manage to increase the lead. Heavens! an inch to one side and that arrow would have plugged me through the head. Wheel around when I give the word and fire into 'em. If we can knock one or two of 'em over, the rest'll keep off."

"All right."

They ran a few yards farther.

"Now!" shouted Joe.

In a second they turned in their tracks, facing the foe.

"Fire!"

Bang—bang—bang!

Two Fire Worshipers who were in advance fell.

The others, when they came up, halted and grouped around them.

It caused a momentary diversion in favor of the fugitives. Away they dashed again, gaining at least fifty yards before the Fire Worshipers again took up the chase.

"Me legs are givin' out," gasped Mickey.

"And my wind's played out," panted Tom.

The race could not be kept up much longer.

The Fire Worshipers, trained to long races, could stand the killing pace the longest.

Mickey had managed to keep in advance, but now he suddenly stopped.

"Howly St. Patrick! we're lost!" he groaned.

An instant later Tom and Joe saw what was the matter.

They had reached a chasm, whose sides were perpendicular. And what was worse, they had run upon a narrow point, so that there was no retreat except by the way they had come.

And that was to run into the arms of the Fire Worshipers, which meant instant death.

They turned and faced the foe, who were now within fifty yards.

The rifles were loaded, for they had shoved in fresh cartridges while running.

"Fire!" cried Tom.

Bang—bang—bang!

Nothing daunted, the Fire Worshipers came on, yelling triumphantly, for the game was cornered.

Hope was gone.

"I'm in fer a quick death, boys! I'll niver be tortured to death by inches by thim divils!" cried Mickey.

"Nor I!" gritted Tom.

"Nor I."

"Will yez leap to death wid me?"

"We will. Better sudden death than torture!"

"Then foller me! Wan—two—three!"

A leap, a fall, and then three bodies shot over the side of the precipice into the yawning chasm whose rocky bottom was a hundred feet below, without a tree or shrub to break the fall.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ENGLISHMAN'S PLOT.

"I'll tame you!" shouted the Englishman, as he sprang like a wild animal toward her.

Clara had been in peril before, but never peril which she considered so terrible as that which now confronted her.

To have such a wretch as the Englishman throw his vile arms around her was awful.

Her hands were bound, and she could not help herself. Oh, how she now wished for her trusty rifle and a clear field. She would then show the wretch no mercy, but would shoot him dead on the spot, as she would have shot down a wild beast.

Hope deserted her. How could she escape. The Spaniard and Mexican were between her and the entrance. There was no passage leading farther back into the rock.

Her fear of the Mexican and Spaniard was less than her horror of the Englishman, and she called to them to help her.

Vain hope! They chuckled fiendishly, and, grinning, showed their yellow teeth.

It was fun—rich fun, to them—to see the poor girl's terror.

She made a desperate struggle to release her hands. Despair! She could not even stretch the strong sash which bound them.

Shriek after shriek issued from her lips, as she retreated as far as she could go, and the Englishman closed in upon her.

When she came to herself she was lying on the floor of the cave, her head supported by the Englishman, while the Spaniard and Mexican were standing near, looking on with curiosity.

"Come to yourself, have you, my dear?" said the Englishman, with a smile.

"Oh, if you have a heart, let me go!"

"Not much, my beauty. We've had too much trouble to capture you."

"But you will have more trouble to keep me. I will never stay voluntarily with you."

"Won't you? Well, now, I think you will—when you're my wife."

"That cannot be. There is no clergyman within hundreds of miles of here."

"That want can be supplied. I suppose you know that such a people as the Fire Worshipers inhabit these mountains?"

Clara shuddered.

"Yes, I know that," she said. "But surely you have nothing to do with them."

"No, we haven't. But we're going to have, if I can bring it about."

"What good will that do you?"

"Much, I imagine. In the first place, I shall send to them the Mexican, who can talk to them, and I shall make a proposition to them to join in a league with them to help exterminate the two Americans and the Irishman."

"Well," said Clara, who, as her excitement passed off, was rapidly regaining her courage.

"We have done nothing against them, while the Americans and the Irishman have, consequently they will join with us in a common cause against their hated foes."

"Well?" said Clara again.

"And as a condition of the compact, I shall stipulate that one of their priests just unites us in marriage."

"That you will find hard work. No woman can be married, except with her consent, and I need not tell you that nothing can ever extort mine—not even the fear of death."

The Englishman laughed.

"Consent isn't necessary at all, my dear," he said. "Of

course it would go for much in a civilized country, but among the Fire Worshipers a girl is not considered of much account, and they marry her whether she wants to or not. You'll see, as soon as I get the priest here."

And again he chuckled.

Clara was silent. She could find no further words for argument, if what the Englishman said was true.

What could she do to avert the threatened calamity? Plainly nothing, except to await developments.

One hope now remained to her—that the Fire Worshipers would refuse to enter into the compact against Tom, Joe and Mickey, and would seize the Englishman, Spaniard, Mexican and herself, and continue the independent campaign against the young Americans.

For, strange as it may seem, she preferred being the prisoner of the uncivilized Fire Worshipers to trusting herself to the mercies of those three brutes of her own race.

The Englishman turned to the Mexican.

"Can you find the main village of the Fire Worshipers?" he asked in Spanish.

"Yes, senor."

"Are you afraid to go?"

"No, senor."

"Then, go. Tell them that we want to form an alliance with them for the extermination of the Americans and Irishman, and ask them to send a priest back with you."

The Mexican nodded and moved toward the door.

"Wait a minute," said the Englishman. "Don't be in such a hurry. There is one thing you must avoid at all hazards."

"What is that, senor?"

"You must not bring any Fire Worshiper with you except the priest."

"All right."

The Mexican went away. Clara had heard the whole of the conversation, but she had not understood a word of it.

But she knew that it boded no good to her, and her mind was filled with dreadful forebodings.

While the Mexican was gone, which was a long time, the Englishman and Spaniard passed their time playing cards, paying little attention to Clara, but being careful to keep between her and the entrance.

Clara sat in a dejected attitude, a prey to gloomy thoughts.

At last a noise was heard in the entrance. The figure of the Mexican appeared, and after him came a Fire Worshiper.

"What luck?" asked the Englishman.

"Good."

"Have they agreed to go in with us?"

"They have; and this is the priest. Speak to him, through me as interpreter, and tell him what you want."

"I want him to make this girl my wife."

The Mexican repeated this to the Fire Worshiper priest, who shook his head and spoke in his own language to him.

"What does he say?" demanded the Englishman inquisitively.

"He says that their laws don't allow him to marry any one except in the temple."

"And he won't do it here?"

"No, senor."

"Then what is to be done?"

Again the Mexican and Fire Worshiper held a conversation together. At the end of it the Mexican turned to the Englishman and said:

"He says it can easily be arranged, senor."

"How so? Give us his plan."

"It is for us all to go with him to the town of the Fire Worshipers. There will then be no obstacle in the way, for you can take the senorita to the temple and he will tie the knot."

"I'm afraid to trust the fellow. Who knows but they'll nab us when they get us there, and have the girl and us too?"

"You need not fear that, senor. They will keep any promise the priest makes for them."

"All right," said the Englishman, shrugging his shoulders. "If you're not afraid to put your head into the lion's mouth, I'm not."

The plan being settled, they at once proceeded to put it into execution.

Clara offered no resistance, for she knew it would do no good, and might only make matters worse.

They left the cave, the priest leading, the Mexican going next, the Englishman and Clara following, and the Spaniard bringing up the rear.

Preserving the same order, they took up their line of march toward the town of the Fire Worshipers.

It was situated high up on the mountains, on a broad plateau, surrounded on all sides by high mountain peaks, and could be defended by well armed men in such a manner as to be almost impregnable.

Which accounted for the fact that the Mexican government had not exterminated these people long before.

Through one of the narrow passes between two frowning precipices the procession filed and entered the city.

They were immediately surrounded by crowds of Fire Worshipers of both sexes and all ages.

The women and children gazed at the newcomers curiously, and the men uttered a howl and seemed disposed to attack them, but the priest checked them by a gesture, and said a few words in his own language, after which they became quiet and made no further show of hostility.

At last a house was reached, before which the priest stopped.

Opening the door, he entered, followed by the others.

"I will send you some food," he said, turning to leave.

The Englishman objected to this.

"Tell him I want the business done that we came for," he said to the Mexican. "I want him to marry me to this girl right away."

He was determined to have two strings to his bow. If he and his companions could not find the treasure, or failed to take it from Tom, Joe and Mickey after they found it, he, being Clara's husband, would claim the share which, according to Mr. Lord's dying instructions, rightfully belonged to her.

The Mexican told the priest what was wanted.

The Fire Worshiper shook his head.

"It cannot be," he said. "The temple is dedicated to sacred purposes this day. No marriage can take place outside of the temple. And you will not be allowed to enter until after midnight."

"The devil!" exclaimed the Englishman, with a scowl. "Is there no way of getting around this beastly rule?"

The Mexican asked the Fire Worshiper, who shook his head.

"Then we'll have to wait," growled the Englishman. "Fetch along the grub. I suppose, my dear, you're awfully hungry."

"I'll not eat a mouthful in your company," said Clara spiritedly.

"Then you can go without. It's all the same to me."

The Fire Worshiper glanced at Clara, and then whispered to the Mexican, who translated:

"He says you had better keep the girl in a room by herself until after midnight."

"Don't see the sense of that. But anything to please the fellow. I'm agreeable."

The priest led the way to a door and opened it.

The Englishman advanced to lead Clara into the room, but she waved him back.

"I don't wish you to touch me," she said.

"All right, my pretty," said the Englishman sneeringly.

"Be'll change all that, though, mighty soon."

"Clara looked disdainfully at him, and walked to the door.

"At the doorway the Fire Worshiper met her, and, more human than the three civilized rascals, commenced to loosen the sash with which her hands were tied.

Removing it, he gave it to her, and then signified that she should enter.

Knowing that words or resistance would be of no avail, she passed through into the room, and the door closed upon her.

A prisoner until midnight, when she was to be led out, conducted to the temple and united according to the heathen forms of the Fire Worshipers, to one of the most villainous men on earth, and the one she detested, loathed and despised beyond all others.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN A FIX.

It was a fearful leap that Tom, Joe and Mickey took over the side of the precipice, whose bottom yawned more than a hundred feet below, and they expected that they had taken their last look at the beautiful earth, and in an

instant more would be lying mangled corpses upon the rocks at the bottom of the ravine.

The Fire Worshipers uttered a cry of consternation, and paused in surprise and dismay.

Their victims, whom they had considered as good as in their hands, were about to escape their vengeance.

True, it was to death they went; but the torture, and the satisfaction of watching the victims writhe and hearing them groan and beg for mercy, would be missed.

And without that, it seemed to the Fire Worshipers but a barren victory.

Rushing to the edge of the cliff, they threw themselves down on their breasts and looked over into the chasm.

Bang—bang—bang!

Three reports, followed by three shouts of agony, and three bodies pitched headforemost over the cliff.

A wild cry of terror, and the others sprang up and started back.

Astonished, terrified, they knew not what to think of it. Had these white men miraculously escaped uninjured after a fall of a hundred feet?

That was impossible.

Or were there other white men at the bottom of the ravine, and was it they who had fired the shouts?

Either that, or was there something supernatural about the thing?

Could their god, the Sun, deign to preserve their lives, miraculously, of the three white men who were fighting against his chosen people?

They did not know what to think, and were undecided whether to stand their ground or retreat, howling, into the wilderness.

While they are standing there, huddled together like a flock of frightened sheep, we will follow our three friends, and see if we cannot account satisfactorily for this seeming miracle.

Tom, Joe and Mickey were alive and well, and the muzzles of their rifles were not many feet from the heads of the Fire Worshipers when the triggers were pulled, and the deadly weapons belched forth death.

When they sprang, with a prayer on their lips for mercy, they expected to fall a hundred feet, at least, but in reality the distance they descended was not a sixth of that.

Fifteen feet below the brow of the precipice a ledge jutted out, and upon that ledge struck Mickey, Tom and Joe.

The shock did not injure them in the least, and in a second they realized that their lives were for the moment spared.

Mickey was the first to comprehend the state of affairs, and seeing that the others were still confused, he took it upon himself to issue orders.

"Run in fresh cartridges," he whispered.

This was instantly done.

"Be after kapin' a good lookout upwards," was the next order. "The spalpeens'll be showin' their heads in a jiffy."

His expectations were realized.

As we have seen, the Fire Worshipers threw themselves down, thrust their heads over the cliff, and instantly, before they could see any one was on the ledge, or that there was a ledge there at all, received a volley that hurled three of their number into eternity.

"Faith, that was well done," ejaculated Mickey, in a low whisper. "An' the divil'll niver be afther knowin' where it came from at all, at all. Kape a little quiet, me byes, an' they'll niver foind out just where we be, for they'll not be cranin' their necks over the side of the rocks ag'in, bejabers! An' even if they do foind us out they can't git to us, be the same token."

"And we can't get away," said Tom.

"Sure, yer roight," said Mickey; "But then it's as broad as it's long."

"Well, it gives us another chance."

"I don't see much of a chance," said Joe. "Here we are on the side of the precipice, ninety feet from the bottom, and fifteen feet from the top. We're in for it."

"Niver say die, Joe, me darlint."

"Oh, I'm not going to give the thing up; but we may as well look the matter square in the face, you know."

"It strikes me they are getting the best of us all around since they captured Clara."

They imagined that it was the Fire Worshipers who captured Clara, in the first instance, never giving a thought to the Englishman, Spaniard and Mexican, whom they left entirely unarmed, and did not consider at all dangerous.

The minutes passed away, and they could devise no

method of escape without exposing themselves to the fire of arrows.

The Fire Worshipers were not inactive.

Loyola restored order among them, and after a few minutes' thought, comprehended the whole affair pretty clearly.

He determined to send four men around the chasm to the other side, with strong bows, to pick off the Americans at their leisure and in safety.

The four Fire Worshipers went around to the other side of the chasm to a point half a mile above, where it was so narrow that they could leap over, when they crossed and sneaked along until they were opposite the party on the other side.

The first intimation that Tom, Joe and Mickey had of danger was when an arrow whizzed past Mickey's head, and broke its flint against the rock back of them.

"Howly mother!" ejaculated Mickey, dodging his head to one side.

Joe, this time, was the quickest of the three.

He had caught sight of the head of the Fire Worshipers above a rock on the other side of the chasm, just as he sent the arrow whizzing across.

Raising his rifle as quick as lightning, he took a sudden aim and fired.

There was a cry, a shriek, and the Fire Worshiper leaped high in the air, tumbled completely over the rock, and pitched headlong into the chasm.

The thud his body made as it struck the bottom could be distinctly heard.

At the same instant Tom fired, but missed his aim, owing to the Fire Worshiper dodging back behind the rock just at the right moment.

They were now in a terrible situation.

Obliged to keep watch in front and behind, it would be strange if one of them was not soon picked off.

They felt the desperation of their case keenly.

"What shall be done?" asked Tom anxiously.

"Heaven only knows," said Joe. "I think we're in for it this time, boys."

Whiz! went another arrow.

Bang! went Mickey's rifle, narrowly missing the mark.

The Fire Worshipers had the advantage, for while they were entirely concealed, except when firing their arrows, and then showing only their heads and arms, Tom, Joe and Mickey were entirely exposed constantly.

The best they could hope to do was to prevent the Fire Worshipers from showing their heads long enough to take proper aim, and even if they could succeed in doing this a chance shot was almost certain to pick them off, sooner or later.

"Mickey," said Tom.

"Yis, sur."

"We've got to get out of this."

"Then we'll have to fly, bedad."

"Can't you invent some plan?"

"It's aisy enough to git down, sur."

"How?"

"By jumpin'. But the divil av it all is the fetchin' up part at the bottom, jist."

"Pshaw! This is no time for levity."

"Sure, an' it is not, sur."

Mickey stood up and looked around.

"There's wan chance left, byes," he said slowly; "but it'll be moighty risky."

CHAPTER XIX.

A CRISIS.

"Very good quarters, these," said the Englishman, stretching himself out after the Fire Worshiper priest left. "I should not mind spending my honeymoon here, eh, gents?"

"As well here as anywhere, senor," responded the Spaniard.

"I wish they would bring us something to eat," grumbled the Mexican.

His desire was soon gratified, for a Fire Worshiper entered, bringing an abundance of food.

They fell to with a will.

While they were eating Lola entered, bearing some food upon a wooden tray.

She did not deign to speak to them, but passed on towards the door of the room where Clara was a prisoner.

"Hold on, there!" exclaimed the Englishman. "Where the deuce are you going? No admittance into that room."

Lola paid no attention to him.

The Englishman sprang to his feet, ran forward and placed his hand upon her arm.

"D'ye hear?" he exclaimed angrily. "I say you can't go in there."

Lola threw off his hand, and looked around at him scornfully.

"Keep your hands off me!" she cried, with flashing eyes. "I am the head chief's adopted daughter. If you would live don't interfere with me, who can call down instant destruction upon you!"

The Englishman, perceiving that he had made a mistake, recoiled, and attempted to make an apology, to which Lola would not listen, but turned from him scornfully, and went into the room where Clara was, closing the door after her.

Lola went softly up to her.

"Don't despair," she said gently. "Eat this food and gain strength, and to-night when they want you to go to the temple do not resist, but go with them. Ask me no questions now, for I have no time to answer them. I will try to defeat those bad men. Don't go to the temple weeping, but be as cheerful as you can, for I want you to be looking your best. Trust me, for I think I can save you."

She put down the wooden tray upon the floor, and was gone before Clara had time to recover sufficiently from her surprise to answer.

Clara, whose courage had returned in consequence of the cheering words, ate the food, and felt refreshed, and then sat down to try and think out what the visit of Lola meant.

She could make nothing of it, but her only chance was to obey the girl, and trust in her.

The hours passed, and night came.

Hour after hour went by, and it was midnight.

The Englishman entered.

"Are you ready, my charming tigress?" he asked sneeringly.

"Yes," said Clara calmly.

"Ho—ho! You've come to the conclusion to submit quietly to the inevitable, have you? Come along, then."

He led the way into the outer room, where were the Spaniard, Mexican and priest.

Leaving the house, they went out on the street and commenced their walk to the temple.

With a wildly beating heart Clara looked around for Lola, in whom her last hope centered.

She was not in sight.

So they went until the temple steps were reached.

No Lola yet.

Oh, heavens! had she deserted her?

And at that instant the last lingering ray of hope fled, and in its place came dull despair.

CHAPTER XX.

LOLA'S STRATEGY.

"Come along," said the Englishman, seizing the girl's arm, as for the first time, she hung back at the steps of the temple. "There's no use—you can't help it, you know, so you had better submit with a good grace."

All hope had now deserted Clara. She preferred death to becoming the Englishman's wife, and she made up her mind to make a last desperate struggle to escape.

If it failed, as it probably would, she would be no worse off than now.

Looking around to see in which direction the way was clear, she, for the first time, caught sight of Lola.

The latter seemed to divine her intention, for she shook her head, and by a gesture signified to Clara that she wished her to enter the temple.

Clara hesitated.

Once inside of the temple, all hope of escape by flight was barred; but in an instant she comprehended the hopelessness of escape at any rate. If she succeeded in breaking away from the Englishman, she was certain to be overtaken and dragged back.

Her only hope was Lola. She must run the risk of proving true her words, and yet she did not see how a delicate girl like her could obtain the mastery of the Englishman, his brutal companions and the priest.

But she must risk it, for therein lay her salvation, and she went on.

"Oh," sneered the Englishman, "you've come to your senses, have you?"

Clara disdained to answer, and they all went up the steps and entered the temple.

Going through a passage, they came into a large room, on one side of which was a blood-stained sacrificial altar.

The Fire Worshiper priest led the way to the altar, and Clara and the Englishman took their places before it.

Before we relate what followed, we will see what steps Lola had taken to prevent so dire a calamity from happening to Clara.

When she left Clara, after taking the food to her, as has been related, she hurried to the principal house of the city, and entered.

This was the house of Loyola, the head chief. The servants of the tribe paid her the most obsequious attention.

"Has Loyola returned?" she asked.

"No."

Lola asked no further questions, but went to her own room in the house, and sat down to wait.

She knew that Loyola went out after Tom, Joe and Mickey, but did not much fear that the warriors would accomplish their object.

Darkness came, and Loyola did not appear.

As the hours passed, Lola's anxiety became more and more intense, and she was about giving up in despair, and going again to the house where Clara was imprisoned, when, at half-past eleven Loyola returned.

In a few words she told him about Clara and of the arrangements that had been made for her marriage to the Englishman in the temple.

"What have I to do with that?" asked Loyola.

"I want you to come with me, where we can see her as they go into the temple.

"Is she more beautiful than you?" he asked.

"A thousand times."

"I don't believe that," said Loyola; "but she must be beautiful, or you would not praise her so. I will go and see her."

His promise won, Lola would not let him delay an instant, lest he should be too late, and immediately led him off toward the temple.

Concealing themselves near the temple, they watched and waited.

They did not have long to wait.

Almost as soon as they were concealed they saw the procession coming.

"Watch!" whispered Lola. "You will see the most beautiful woman the gods ever looked upon."

Loyola looked, and was converted.

At that moment Clara stopped at the foot of the temple steps, and seemed resolved to go no farther.

It was then that Lola showed herself, and beckoned her to go on.

When they had passed into the temple, Lola turned and said to Loyola:

"Was I not right?"

"Beautiful! Beautiful!" muttered Loyola.

"How would you like to have her for a wife?"

"She is promised to the white man."

"She would rather die than marry him."

"Then she shall not. She shall be my wife. Let us enter the temple."

They hurried into the temple, afraid that the ceremony would be over before they arrived, and entered the room where the altar was.

Lola rushed to Clara, and caught her in her arms.

"Saved!" she cried.

"Stand back!" cried the Englishman, thrusting her aside.

"This girl is mine."

An instant later he found himself dashed aside by Loyola, who cried:

"Touch not the adopted daughter of the head chief of the Fire Worshipers."

For an instant he stood gazing sternly upon the villainous trio, and then cried grandly:

"I am Loyola."

The name was enough for the Spaniard and Mexican, who cowered back in terror, leaving the Englishman standing alone to confront the storm.

"Make no objection to anything Loyola says," whispered Lola to Clara. "Trust me; all shall yet come out right."

Loyola turned to Clara.

"Do you wish to marry this man?" he asked, in broken English.

"I would rather die."

"Then you shall not. You shall be my wife instead!"

Poor Clara! She did not know what to say to this. It seemed like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire.

But she felt a warning touch from Lola, and remained silent.

For a while the Englishman fumed and stormed in impotent rage, cursing the priest, Loyola, Clara and the Fire Worshipers in general, until he was interrupted by the Mexican.

"What shall we do?" he demanded.

"There's only one thing, senior," responded the Mexican, "and that is to get out of this city as fast as our legs will carry us."

"And after that——"

"Find the treasure."

"Perhaps the Americans have found it, while we have been fooling away our time here," growled the Spaniard.

"Then we must watch our chance, kill them, and seize it," said the Mexican.

"That's the talk," gritted the Englishman.

The plans being laid, they left the temple, sneaked out of the city, and directed their steps toward the woods.

Meanwhile, Clara, Lola and Loyola went to the latter's house, when he separated from them, and Clara and Lola went to the latter's room.

"You see, I keep my word," said Lola.

"I can never thank you sufficiently for defeating the schemes of that ruffianly Englishman; but I am a very unhappy girl."

"Why so?"

"To-morrow night I am doomed to become Loyola's wife."

"And does that cause you anguish?"

"Misery."

"Don't let it trouble you so much. Perhaps we may prevent that also."

"Oh, if you only could! But how?"

"I will tell you."

Lola commenced speaking earnestly, and as she talked Clara's face brightened.

"Now let us go to bed and get some sleep," said Lola, in conclusion. "We will need it."

The next morning Lola said to Loyola:

"Do not trouble Clara until the time comes for you to take her to the temple. The excitement of last night has made her weak and ill."

Loyola assented.

Lola returned to Clara.

"I am going away to carry out my plans," she said.

"Don't be frightened if I do not return before night."

And then she hurried out of the house and toward the mountains.

CHAPTER XXI.

OUT OF THE TRAP.

"There's wan chance left, byes," repeated Mickey Free; "but, as I was afther sayin', it's a moighty risky wan."

"Never mind the risk. We've got to take it. If we stay here it's sure death. What's the plan?"

"D'ye see that ledge a little farther along the soide of the cliff?"

"What of it?"

"We'll have to jump from this to that; but whin we're afther gettin' there, we'll be where the precipice ain't so steep."

"Well?"

"An' thin we can climb to the bottom by howldin' onto the unaven places."

"Tom, we must risk it," said Joe.

"It will be certain death."

"No; it offers a chance. To stay here is to die."

"Very good. I'm willing to try it, if you are."

Springing to his feet, Mickey bounded along to the edge of the ledge, followed by the others.

It was a long leap across, but their case was desperate, and they made a desperate spring.

By good luck all landed safely on the opposite ledge. Now came the most perilous part of the undertaking—to descend the face of the cliff.

Not an instant did they hesitate.

Throwing themselves over the edge, they went down like cats, grasping at projections at every point.

A false clutch, and all was lost, for their fall would be unbroken nearly a hundred feet.

The arrows came whirling around them.

Down—down—down!

"Hurrah!" shouted Mickey Free.

He had reached the bottom at last.

An instant later Tom and Joe stood beside him.

"Away wid yez!" cried Mickey. "The arrows av the spalpeens can hit us here."

Away they dashed, never pausing until they were well away from the dangerous locality.

"What next?" asked Tom, as they paused to take breath.

"Find Clara."

"Bedad, that'll be hard wurruk."

"Where are we to look?" asked Tom.

"Among the Fire Worshipers," said Tom.

"I'm thinkin' we'd better be lookin' fer grub first. 'I'm hungry," said Mickey.

"We must go on, then, beyond the hearing of the Fire Worshipers, as they would hear our rifles."

They went on farther to the eastward about five or six miles. Happening to spy an antelope, Tom fired, and brought it down.

Half an hour after a fire was started, and the antelope roasting.

The meal over, they set out in the direction of the main city of the Fire Worshipers.

Fortunately, they reached a point which commanded a full view without being seen.

By this time it was sundown, and darkness soon after shut out the view.

What was to be done next?

Joe was for making their way into the city that night and trying to find Clara.

Tom and Mickey contended that the best plan would be to remain where they were until morning, and watch the city the next day. They would probably be able to discover whether Clara was there or not. If she was, they could devise some plan to get her away. While, if she was not, it would be foolhardy to risk their lives when they could gain nothing by it.

Being in the minority, Joe was forced to give up his desperate plan.

Tired and worn out by the toil of the day, they lay down and were soon asleep.

In the morning they were upon their feet at break of day.

Soon after sunrise they took up their positions where they could see all that was going on in the streets of the city.

For a while they discovered nothing.

Suddenly Mickey exclaimed:

"If that ain't Loly, I'm a spalpeen!"

They watched her for a while in silence.

"She's coming through the pass forninst us," said Mickey. "Let's hail her."

As she entered the pass Tom stepped out.

"Good-morning, Lola!" he said.

Lola started suddenly, and looked up. Then she uttered an exclamation of glad surprise, and climbed up on the rocks until she stood beside him.

"I was sure I would find you somewhere near," she said, lowering her eyes and blushing at the ardent look of admiration that Tom bestowed upon her.

"Is Clara in the city?" asked Joe, stepping from behind a rock and coming forward, followed by Mickey.

"She is; and I came out to find you to propose a plan for her rescue."

She related all she knew of Clara's capture, and then explained her plan.

"A good one!" exclaimed all in a chorus.

"Don't fail me," said Lola.

"Depend upon us," said Joe.

And then Lola left them and went back into the Fire Worshipers' city to relate her success to Clara.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION.

Lola hurried back to Clara and told her what she had done. And then she explained the programme she had marked out.

It was for the two girls to leave the house at eleven o'clock, steal out of the city, and meet the young men, who were to be a short distance on the other side of the pass with the horses.

"We may be stopped on our way and taken back by the Fire Worshipers," said Clara, trembling.

"They will not attempt to stop me. At any rate, it is your only chance."

"But they will punish you severely when they find it out."

"I shall not return," said Lola quietly.

The hours passed, and an hour before midnight, the time when Loyola was to come and take Clara to the temple, they stole out of the house.

They passed several Fire Worshipers in the streets, but they did not attempt to stop Lola, and fortunately Loyola was not encountered.

Reaching the pass, they had just gone through when they heard footsteps approaching.

Hiding among the trees, they saw three men approaching.

"The Englishman, Spaniard and Mexican," whispered Clara, shrinking back.

"They are spying around the city, hoping to get you back," whispered Lola.

The villainous trio entered the pass. The girls were about to go on, when they heard other footsteps behind of at least twenty men.

"A body of Fire Worshipers returning to the city," whispered Lola.

At that instant a series of cries were heard, coming from the city.

"They have discovered our escape," whispered Lola. "They are rushing towards the pass. The Englishman and his companions are lost. They cannot escape from either end of the pass, and the sides are so steep they cannot climb them. They are doomed!"

She was right. A series of cries from both bodies of Fire Worshipers were heard.

Then came pistol shots—then cries and shouts and curses—then silence.

"They are dead," whispered Lola, shuddering. "Hurry! We must go on before the Fire Worshipers get here."

Running on a quarter of a mile farther they came upon Tom, Joe and Mickey with the horses.

A few words from the girls explained the situation of affairs. No time was lost. Lifting the girls up before them, they put spurs to the horses.

Riding all night, they found themselves clear of the mountains in the morning, and considered themselves safe.

And so they were, for they were troubled by the Fire Worshipers no more, and after some days of easy riding reached the Rio Grande River without further adventure.

Hailing a steamboat that happened to be passing, they were taken on board, and from there the passage to New Orleans was easy.

In New Orleans they spent a week, and then traveled by steamer to New York, where the diamonds were sold, and fortunes for Tom, Mickey and Clara were realized.

With part of his Tom bought a house in New York, and took Lola to it, as his wife.

Joe followed his example, except that his bride was Clara. And Mickey Free, not to be outdone, bought a farm on Long Island, found a stunning Irish girl who was willing to become Mrs. Free, and made her so without delay.

Which certainly was very sensible in Mickey.

And they visit each other constantly, and never tire of talking about their adventures "Among the Fire Worshipers."

Next week's issue will contain "JACK WRIGHT AND HIS ELECTRIC SEA MOTOR; OR, THE SEARCH FOR A DRIFTING WRECK."

Send Postal For Our Free Catalogue.

HELP YOUR COUNTRY!

SECRETARY HOUSTON POINTS OUT HOW BOYS CAN HELP NATION.

How every American boy, although separated by the Atlantic Ocean from the actual theater of the war against autocracy, can play his part in upholding American ideals, is pointed out by Secretary of Agriculture Houston in a message addressed to the Boy Scouts of America. The Secretary pledges to the boys the hearty co-operation of the Federal and State agricultural agencies.

Secretary Houston's statement follows:

"The splendid army of Boy Scouts of America can be of very great help to the Nation in this time of world need. The war can be won only if we deliver the men, the ships, and the food in sufficient number and quantities to make our war program effective. You as Boy Scouts can greatly aid by growing home vegetable gardens, raising pigs and poultry, conserving food by canning and drying for home use, and in many other ways open to you.

"Will you not help your country again this year even in a bigger and a better way than you did during the summer of 1917? Your task will be to 'beat your own record' in food production and conservation. May your motto for 1918 be, 'every scout to feed a soldier and one other.'

"I desire to extend to you the hearty good will and co-operation of the officials of the United States Department of Agriculture, also that of the co-operative club leaders of boys' and girls' extension work at the agricultural colleges, who will be glad to assist you in your work."

LIBERTY LOAN SLOGANS.

1. Back those Bayonets with Bonds.
2. Money means Munitions—Buy Liberty Bonds.
3. Invest in Victory—Buy Liberty Bonds.
4. Buy Liberty Bonds—and Johnnie Comes Marching Home.
5. Oversubscribe the Third Liberty Loan.
Over the Top to the Third Line Trenches!
6. Your Money or their Lives.
Save Both—Buy Liberty Bonds.
7. Count that day lost—whose low descending sun
Sees in your hand no Liberty Bond or Gun.
8. Fight—or Buy Bonds.
9. Get into the Fight—Buy Liberty Bonds.
10. Liberty Bonds Save Lives—the Lives of our Sons.
11. Lend Him a Hand—Buy Liberty Bonds.
12. Save More Lives—Buy More Bonds.
13. We're in It—Let's Win It.
Buy Liberty Bonds.
14. He also Fights who Helps a Fighter Fight.
15. Buy Liberty Bonds.
Buy—BUY—BUY—till it hurts!

INVESTMENT.

1. A Bond in the Hand is Worth Two in the Booth.
2. Keep your Money—Invest in Liberty Bonds.
3. While your Money Fights the Kaiser, Make it Work at Home for You—Buy Liberty Bonds.
4. You don't need a Bank Account to Buy Liberty Bonds.
5. Doing Without is as Vital as Doing. Save and Buy Liberty Bonds.
6. A Better Investment than a Liberty Bond—Two Liberty Bonds.
7. Buy a BIG Bond.
8. Don't Put Off till To-morrow the Bond You Can Buy To-day.
9. Buy a Baby Bond for Baby.
10. A Good Return on your Money.
A Quick Return for our Men.
Buy Liberty Bonds.

MISCELLANEOUS.

1. Germany is Listening—Make your Money Talk—Buy a Liberty Bond.
2. Buy—Buy Liberty Bonds—Bye-Bye Kaiser!
3. The Third Liberty Loan—Make it "Three Strikes and Out for the Kaiser"!
4. Liberty Bonds Speak Louder than Words.
5. Carry On! Buy More Liberty Bonds!
6. Over the Top with your Dollars—Buy Liberty Bonds.
7. Time Fights for Germany—Buy Bonds Now.
8. The Kaiser Started This.
You End It—Buy Liberty Bonds.

CANNED ORANGES AND OSTRICH EGGS.

In the orange-growing districts of Spain oranges are now being sliced and canned for shipment as raw material in the making of marmalade. Canned Seville bitter oranges have recently been received in Canada for marmalade making as a result of a shortage of similar fruits in the latter country, combined with cold weather making shipment of fresh fruit difficult.

Another novelty in the canning line, recently reported, is ostrich eggs, which are being packed experimentally in South America in liquid form and shipped to London. One ostrich egg weighs between two and three pounds and is equivalent to about two dozen hens' eggs. If this experiment opens a market for ostrich eggs in cooking or table use the ostrich farmers of South America, it is said, will be able to maintain their industry, which has been suffering from the handicap of no demand for ostrich feathers during war times. Fresh ostrich eggs have long been a staple product in South America, it is said, and are used by bakers to mix with hens' eggs in the making of cake and pastry.

CURRENT NEWS

For the theft of cloth used in making United States Army uniforms eight men were indicted in New York City by the Federal Grand Jury on February 21st, one being a civilian clerk who had charge of the cloth records of the Quartermaster Corps, Army Building, in that city. The local police officials say the frauds may reach a value of \$5,000,00.

Frank Stevens, a railroad laborer of Livingston, Mont., has inherited \$60,000, the estate of a rich uncle, John Stevens of Long Beach, Cal., according to word received in Livingston recently. Stevens is fifty years old and has worked hard all his life. The uncle, who was practically unknown to him, was interested in mining. Stevens has postponed his wedding to Mrs. Alice Hattan of Butte from February 17th until May, and will leave immediately for California to secure his legacy.

It has been brought to the attention of the War Department that on a recent trip of one of the ships being used to transport troops for oversea duty, considerable damage was done to the fittings of the boat, and some of the linen and bedding either taken from the boat or damaged, due apparently to a desire on the part of officers and men to secure souvenirs of the trip. The Secretary of War directs that commanding officers of troops will in the future take steps to prevent such action on the part of troops in their commands.

Our Navy is making use of a tag which is unique among all identification tags for the reason that it carries the thumb print of the bearer, says the Scientific American. The tag is made of monel metal and is unaffected by the corrosive action of sea water. It is quite small, measuring in oval shape 1 1-3 by 1 1-2 inches. It is perforated at one end so that it can be suspended from the neck by a wire braid, which in turn is encased in a cotton covering. On one side appear the name and initials of the wearer, the month, day and year of enlistment and month, day and year of birth. "U.S.N." is added, and when the owner is an officer, his rank and date of appointment. On the reverse side is the finger print.

President Wilson signed an order on February 25th authorizing the construction of a water power dam at Mussel Shoals, Alt., as part of the \$60,000,000 project for a Government plant there for the fixation of atmospheric nitrogen for use in the manufacture of munitions and fertilizer. The dam site has been offered to the Government without cost by the Atlanta Power Company, which also has agreed to transfer options on about seventy-five per cent.

of the land which would be affected by the overflow of the dam. Announcement that the Government would spend approximately \$60,000,000 at Mussel Shoals, which is on the Tennessee River, was made on February 23d, but details of the project were withheld.

An European inventor proposes to make a paper horseshoe that shall, for general purposes, be the equal of the steel horseshoe, in the following way. Parchment paper is cut out in horseshoe form and built up to a suitable thickness by the use of a mixture of turpentine, Spanish white shellac and linseed oil treated with litharge, and the whole is placed under the hydraulic press. This produces very light and uniform pieces, and it is an easy matter to stamp out the nail holes and grooves. Instead of nailing to the horse's hoof, they can be applied with an adhesive composition whose principal part is a solution of rubber bisulphide of carbon. Paper paste could also be molded into the shape of a horseshoe by use of the press, but the result is not as good as with the above. Among objections to it are these: the surface is too even and slippery and the shoe would not hold well on the ground.

The introduction of electric railways into Alpine districts has been the means of establishing a new and somewhat strange industry—namely, the quarrying of glacier ice for distribution in large cities. Certain of the Swiss communes have granted concessions of their glaciers for this purpose, and ice slides or V-shaped troughs have been constructed in which blocks of ice blasted out of the glacier are transported to the vicinity of the stations for conveyance, in carefully refrigerated vans, to large cities remote from the Alps. The method of blasting with black powder so as to avoid the discoloration and soiling of the ice, and the engineering ability displayed in erecting the slides and in providing sufficient friction by means of curves to avoid excessive speed in the downward journey of the ice blocks are spoken of by the London Times as examples of considerable ingenuity and skill. Glacier ice, which is perfectly pure and transparent, and which has many qualities which are greatly appreciated by consumers, commands a higher value than that of the usual kind obtained from the surface of frozen ponds or lakes. A singular feature in connection with the preparation of the ice for the market is that it has been found necessary to store it for some days in special warehouses, formed of a double thickness of boarding with a stratum of sawdust interposed, in order to remove a coating of frosted or nontransparent ice which tends to form on the surface of each block as it leaves the glacier.

SENT ON THE ROAD

—OR—

A SMART BOY IN BUSINESS

By J. P. RICHARDS

(A serial story)

CHAPTER V (Continued).

If it was to be the same in every other city as he found it in Chicago, then there seemed but little hope for the concern.

"Why, it needs a man here right along," he thought. "What good can I do by rushing around here for three or four days? Instead of picking up anything new, we lose what little we had before."

And now he began to appreciate Mr. Bagley's position and to understand why he had winked at the crookedness of his agents.

It had been a case of being glad to take what little was coming rather than to lose it all.

Walter walked all the way to Madison street and Morgan thinking over the situation.

He was not a bit sorry he had copied the figures. He felt that he had just left the presence of a rascal who had violated every rule of business honor and who richly deserved to be downed.

"I'll get that job," thought Walter. "I'll see those plans if it takes a leg, and I'll put my bid in, too."

He stopped before the lighted window of a store and looked over the measurements.

"There ought to be a couple of hundred in it, even if I drop as much more below this price," he thought. "Yes, I'm going for that job, even if I stay in Chicago a week."

But this was only one thing.

When Walter thought of the immensity and activity of this wonderful city, which he now saw for the first time, it came to him in the strongest kind of way that he had been wrong in his advice to Tom Bagley.

For him to attempt to jump from one city to another and fight for contracts could never save the firm.

What was really needed was a new line of agents who could be relied upon to do active work.

Both he and Tom were working under a frightful disadvantage.

Ben Lake was dead.

Mr. Bagley was dead.

They two alone had known the truth about the agents for the company. He and Tom had it all to learn.

And with insufficient capital behind them it all seemed so hopeless.

Walter had now worked himself into a state of deep discouragement.

By the time he reached the Wynwood House,

where he was stopping, he felt about ready to throw up the sponge.

It seemed to him then that nothing could save the firm.

CHAPTER VI.

CAUGHT IN THE CRASH.

The Wynwood House on West Madison street was nothing more nor less than the upper floors of several ramshackle old stores thrown into one.

It was not at all a proper place for the representative of a large New York house to stay, and Walter would have done better if he had gone somewhere else even at a higher price.

"A gentleman left his card for you, Mr. Webster," said the clerk, as Walter went to the desk for his key.

There was a wonderful change in the man's tone. He spoke most respectfully, whereas each time Walter had found occasion to approach him before the clerk had treated him with an air of supercilious contempt.

Now, as he handed out the card, Walter was not slow in guessing the reason of the change.

Ferdinand Ford was the name engraved upon the card.

"He came in an automobile," said the clerk. "He said he was sorry to have missed you, and that he would look in here at half-past nine to-morrow morning. I suppose you know who he is?"

"If I was not acquainted with the gentleman," said Walter quietly, "do you suppose he would have called on me?"

Perhaps the bluff worked and perhaps it didn't.

Walter neither knew nor cared.

He went in to supper, and a very poor one it was.

Tired and discouraged, he soon sought his room, and, after making up his bid on the Phillips job, went to bed instead of going down-town to take a look at the city by night, as he had intended to do.

It was anything but a pleasant evening, and that was another reason for giving up his plan.

A high wind was blowing off the lake.

The ramshackle old frame building seemed to tremble, the window-sashes rattled horribly.

Walter crawled out of bed and wedged them up with burnt matches, but even then they let out occasional pistol-like reports.

It was a long time before he got asleep.

Somewhere along about two o'clock Walter suddenly awoke without any apparent reason, unless it was a dream he was in the midst of when he came back to life.

He was dreaming that the lordly Twist came into his room and stood by his bedside.

Just then the window-sash gave out one of its reports.

(To be continued.)

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

MOTOR MAIL ROUTE COVERS 88 MILES.

A motor mail route will be established between Cave City, Ky., and Louisville. It previously has been announced from Indianapolis that a similar route from Louisville to Indianapolis would be established. This plan is being tried out by the Government to enable farmers to market their perishable and other products. If these routes prove successful the system probably will become universal throughout the country. From Louisville to Cave City is a distance of 88.8 miles. Cars will leave Louisville and Cave City at five o'clock each morning except Sunday and will reach the other city by two o'clock in the afternoon. The Dixie highway will be followed.

SAFETY PIN IS ANCIENT.

The safety pin and the hook and eye are generally supposed to be modern inventions. The former, in fact, has been credited to Queen Victoria. She may have improved upon it, but certainly she is not entitled to the distinction of having invented it.

Numerous specimens of the useful contrivance have been found in the ruins of Crete. Some of them are in the museum of the University of Pennsylvania, and the museum has also a hook and eye from the same place.

Both the safety pins and the hook and eye now in the museum were made at least nine hundred years before Christ. Some are made of bronze, but amber or some other material was often used on the more elaborate pins. Some were even made of finely wrought gold.

BUTTONS.

Buttons are one of the many things that the Government has to concern itself about in times of war. It is reported that the stock of buttons in this country, that is to say, the stock suitable for military purposes, is to be taken over by the Government.

Manufacturers of buttons to all appearances fall far short in their production, and the shortage is intensified by the fact that England also seems short of buttons and has been in the past importing from the United States.

Buttons are needed in enormous quantities for the clothing of the fighting men and the Government, it is reported, is taking an inventory of the country's stock of buttons of metal, horn and vegetable ivory and may save the manufacturers the trouble of looking for customers. Good prices will be paid by the Government.

INDIA'S VARIED PEOPLES.

The population of India is far more diverse than is generally thought. They talk about 150 different

languages, and are divided up into forty-three distinct nationalities. There are 2,378 main castes, besides a large number of sub-castes. There are 200,000,000 Hindus, from which, fortunately, we can draw fighting men; 50,000,000 Mohammedans, while among the Hindus there are 50,000,000 of degraded people of no caste, whose touch, or even shadow, is supposed to cause pollution.

The girls are of all sorts, bright little things with pounds worth of gold ornaments round their necks and arms and in their ears and noses. These are Brahman children, who must be married before they are ten, and are then kept secluded in their mothers' homes till the final marriage ceremonies are complete, when they are passed on to the houses of their mothers-in-law.

A Brahman or Hindu girl has refined features, and in figure is what the French call petite. Their carriage is erect, their limbs are beautifully molded, and their every action is graceful. With regard to families, twenty people will frequently live in the same house dependent on a solitary wage earner.

HORSE MEAT A FRENCH DISH.

England is beginning to talk about eating horseflesh as an unpleasant but possible eventuality of the future. In France there has never been the same prejudice against horse meat, and the horse has been a recognized and much-used article of diet among the less wealthy. Horse steak, finely minced, is widely prescribed by French physicians to be eaten raw as a tonic by weak persons and sickly children.

In Paris and its suburbs there are about 1,000 butchers' shops where only horse meat is sold, and their average trade is four or five horses each week. They sell nothing but horse meat, because the law forbids the sale except in special shops. But they do not hide shamefacedly up back streets. There are several within a stone's throw of the Madeleine and a half dozen within easy shopping distance of the American Embassy.

The Paris horse butcher is so little ashamed of his calling that he paints his shop a brilliant red and puts a gilded horse's head outside as a sign. All his meat comes from a special horse slaughter house at Vaugirard, where the butchering is conducted under rigid municipal supervision.

It is a mistake, according to Paris experts, to suppose that the younger the horse the better the meat. The reverse is said to be true—at least horses eight years old and upward are preferred, and below that age the meat is said to be tough and unflavored.

The price of the best cuts of horse meat in Paris is at present from 18 cents to 50 cents a pound, having doubled since the war.

INTERESTING TOPICS

CADETS THRIVE ON WAR DIET.

Food conservation measures at West Point have effected great saving in grain, fats and sugar, while the health of the cadet corps is better than ever, according to a report made to the Food Administration from Capt. B. A. Dixon, treasurer of the United States Military Academy.

All bread is made of 45 per cent. wheat flour, 45 per cent. rye and 10 per cent. white bolted grain flour. The use of lard and butterine has been discontinued in favor of drippings from the fatty portions of meat carcasses. Cane syrup has reduced the consumption of sugar.

SHOES HIS BANK.

One thousand hidden dollars, which Postmaster Purdy, of Minneapolis, Minn., incidentally believed were not originally supposed to be recovered until spring, went into the Treasury of the United States. This amount was invested in war savings stamps by a Polish workman at the Post Office.

The man approached the Thrift Stamp window and by pointing to a large pile of stamps he indicated he wanted to buy a large amount.

"Where's your money?" asked the clerk.

He squatted down and took off two poudorous shoes. Between his socks and the soles of his shoes were \$1,000 in bills. Clerks who witnessed the procedure said there was certain conclusive evidence that the money was stowed away many months ago.

He got the stamps.

CHOPPED 6,027 CORDS WOOD.

A record in wood chopping is claimed by L. J. Haugen, fifty years old, who lives near Clinton, Wis. Up to the opening of the present lumbering season he chopped 6,207 cords.

He is a Norwegian. During the summer he works for farmers about the county, but as soon as the first signs of winter are apparent he shoulders his ax and starts for the timber land. He figures his chopping career from the time he was twenty, since which he has averaged two cords a day during the chopping season.

The following statistics inevitably follow: If 6,207 cords were placed end to end they would extend nearly nine and one-half miles. If piled one on top of another they would be more than four miles high. At present prices that wood is worth \$40,000.

AIRPLANES SINK SUBMARINE.

An encounter between two French hydro-airplanes and a German submarine in the English Channel recently probably resulted in the sinking of the U-boat after it had been bombed by the planes, according to an official announcement by the French admiralty.

The seaplanes were on patrol duty over the Channel when they discovered the submarine on the surface. They attacked it, after manoeuvring so that the sun was at their backs, and the submarine plunged, but it did not disappear before the aviators had succeeded in dropping several bombs on or near the periscope.

TOO FAMILIAR WITH HIS FATHER.

In the Province of Loraine, Germany, a boy twelve years old and his father went to the deepot to make a journey by rail. They were looking about and talking to each other when the boy called his father "pop" instead of father. The station master overheard it, and asked of the father: "Do you allow your son to be so familiar with you as that? If so, then we must see about it." He had father and son taken into court, and the father was fined sixty cents and the son sent to jail for three days for being too familiar with each other. Had the boy called his father "governor," or "old man," as some American boys do, perhaps he would have been hanged.

MAGNETS FOR RECOVERY SUNKEN CARGO.

Some time ago a barge loaded with about 420 tons of sand-cast pig iron was lost in the Tennessee River near Paducah, Ky. The iron was strewn along the river bottom for a distance of 100 feet or more, free of the barge. The insurance company paid some \$10,000 to the shippers of the iron, and in order to recover some of this it began salvage operations. For this purpose a barge carrying a derrick and power hoist was employed, together with a powerful electromagnet. The bottom of the river was explored with the electromagnet and in time over ninety per cent., or approximately four hundred tons, of the iron was recovered. In the meantime the price of the iron had gone up appreciably, with the result that the recovered cargo was sold for \$16,000, while the total cost of recovering it, including the purchase of the magnet and other equipment, did not exceed \$4,000.

CAPTURES A GERMAN SPY.

Louis Hershkovitz, alias Louis Hirschey, was found guilty by a jury in the United States Federal Court at New Orleans on February 21st of obtaining prohibited information regarding the Algiers Naval Station for the benefit of the enemy. Judge Foster sentenced him to two years in the Atlanta Penitentiary. George Crawford testified that Hershkovitz's plans included getting drawings of the naval station at Algiers and other information in Galveston and Dallas, after which he was to go to Germany by way of Mexico.

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, APRIL 17, 1918.

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

A common yellow cur owned by Hugh McQuain of Indian Fork, near Sutton, W. Va., a soldier stationed at Camp Lee, refused to permit distance to bar his presence beside his young master. The dog mysteriously disappeared from home and three weeks later came a letter from young McQuain that the dog had turned up at Camp Lee. The distance is nearly 400 miles.

Work was started by the Ford Motor Company on February 23d on a plant at River Rouge, a suburb of Detroit, Mich., to cost \$2,000,000, which will be devoted exclusively to the manufacture of the 200-foot vessels designed to chase and destroy U-boats. It is said that the plant will employ 10,000 to 15,000 men, will cover an area of five acres and be completed by May 10th.

A club house for enlisted men will be established in Washington by the National Congress of Mothers and Parent Teachers' Associations. According to the Committee on Public Information, the house will be located in Jackson place, nearly opposite the White House. Reading and recitation rooms as well as sleeping accommodations and a cafeteria will be provided for the men.

A Navy base hospital of 500 beds, made up principally of physicians, nurses and enlisted personnel enrolled in the Naval Reserve Force from Leland Stanford University, San Francisco, Cal., has reached the war zone. This hospital will take care of Navy personnel, both ashore and afloat, and will also be available, if accommodations exist, for Army and Allied sick and wounded.

Music will be used in Army hospitals in treating convalescent American soldiers returned from Europe suffering from shell shock, gas effects and other war maladies, if an experiment being conducted at the Fort McHenry Hospital near Baltimore

by the Commission on Training Camp Activities of the War and Navy Departments proves successful. The value of music in the hospital is to be demonstrated by Mrs. Isa Maud Ilsen, for mer superintendent of the Military Infirmary at Hamilton, Ontario, whose appointment with the status of song leader was announced on March 9 by Raymond B. Fossdick, chairman of the commission. Mrs. Ilsen has been administering melody with medicine to wounded Canadian soldiers at the Hamilton Infirmary since the outbreak of the war, and her plan is said to have resulted effectively in a great many cases. She will assume her duties at once.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

The Man With an Only Son—"What kind of scholars do you turn out at this institution? Principal—Those who won't study.

Tom—There goes Miss Peachly. I don't consider her a beauty, do you? Dick—I should say not. But when did she refuse you?

Father—Politeness costs nothing, sir. Son—I don't know, dad. Try putting "Your obedient servant" on the bottom of a telegram.

Nervous Employer—I don't pay you for whistling. Office Boy—That's all right, sir. I can't whistle well enough yet to charge extra for it.

Mother—You are at the foot of the spelling class again, are you? Boy—Yes'm. Mother—How did that happen? Boy—Got too many z's in scissors.

"That's about as crooked a piece of work as I ever saw," mused Uncle Allen Sparks, looking at the track the lightning had made on the body of the big tree.

Wife (suddenly awakening)—Hark! Horrors! What's the matter? Fido is 'way downstairs, yelping as if he were hurt. What's happened to the little dear? Husband—I threw him at a burglar.

Doctor—What a healthy looking boy you have, Mrs. Gooley! His cheeks are as fat as butter. Mrs. Gooley—It ain't from bein' healthy thot makes thim two chakes shtick out. He do be havin' toothache on both soides.

A merchant of New York, who was on the verge of bankruptcy, took a walk with his cashier, who had grown rich and built a fine house in a fashionable avenue. In his pride of heart he showed his employer his palatial dwelling, and asked triumphantly, "What do you think of that?" "I think," said the merchant, after a pause, "that you had better take my business, and let me act as cashier."

PEARY'S BOY GUIDE

—OR—

ICEBOUND IN THE ARCTIC

By WILLIAM WADE

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER IV (Continued).

"Were you paid?"

"Yes, I was given a good rifle and cartridges."

"Can we do anything for you?"

"Nothing. I will go if there is no more to say."

"Good-by."

The Esquimau paddled away for the Greenland shore, and the ship was put under a full head of steam and proceeded on her way.

Very little ice was encountered after that, and the most favorable weather conditions prevailed until they reached Cape Sabine.

On the day after they passed the cape Jack was standing in the bow of the ship, when Peary came up behind him and said:

"Jack, I am going to test your story about that treasure to-day."

"I am glad to hear it, sir," replied the boy, "for I have been afraid that Dan May might fit out an expedition in New York and come up here after the gold. I would hate to have that rascal get it, after all."

"My dear boy, within an hour we will be at a point where we can go ashore and investigate the ship which you say you saw encased in ice. If the treasure is aboard of her, we shall get it and bring it aboard the Roosevelt. There will then be small likelihood of your enemy getting any of it, even if he does come up here."

He walked away, and Grace joined the boy and asked with a smile:

"What makes you look so thoughtful, Jack?"

"Well," replied the boy, "we are pretty close to the place where the big treasure is of which I spoke to you, and Mr. Peary has assured me that he will investigate the matter, and if the gold is still there he will have it taken aboard this ship. If he does that, and I should get back to civilization with it, I shall be a very rich fellow."

"Oh, my! I do hope you will get it, Jack."

They continued talking for some time, and were just about to walk away when the boy suddenly caught sight of a far-distant rock on the shore ahead of a peculiar shape, and he paused and cried:

"By Jove, there is my landmark now!"

"What do you mean?" asked the puzzled girl, pausing.

"Do you see that big rock off there on shore?"

"Plainly."

"Well, we are to go ashore at that spot."

"Does the treasure lie near that rock?"

"Just behind it."

"You had better tell Mr. Peary."

"I shall, so he can have the Roosevelt hauled to."

They hurried aft, and the moment they were forward of the commander's cabin door a man rose up from behind a big coil of rope, where he had been lying concealed, listening to all that was said.

It was Dan May, and he had a broad grin upon his clean-shaven face.

He hurried away to find his partner in rascality, so they could so arrange matters that they would be named as part of the boat's crew which was to row Peary and Jack ashore.

The boy had gone into Peary's stateroom and cried excitedly:

"Mr. Peary, we are nearing the place where we are to land!"

"Got your bearings, Jack?" asked the explorer smilingly.

"Yes, sir; come out on deck and I will show you the place."

The explorer complied, and he was shown the big rock, and turning to the helmsman, he told him to alter the ship's course.

An hour later the ship was opposite the landmark.

CHAPTER V.

FINDING THE TREASURE.

When the quarter-boat left the Roosevelt with Jack, Grace and Peary, Dan May and his friend Jerry were part of the crew at the oars.

A short row brought the vessel to the steep shore, and Jack debarked.

He assisted Grace to leave the boat, and as Peary sprang ashore he cast a swift glance around at the rugged scenery and asked:

"Whereabouts is your treasure ship, Jack?"

"This way, sir," answered the boy, as he strode off with the girl.

There were towering ice peaks and huge hummocks all around them, around which they had to wind their way, until at length a great wall of ice towered up in front.

Jack led the way to the back of it, and here they suddenly came in sight of the wreck of a big steamship half buried in the mass.

As the sternmost part of the hulk was projecting from the frozen pinnacles, and there was a gaping breach in the iron hull, the way to get inside of the vessel was open to them.

"Dark as pitch in there," commented the explorer, as he peered in.

"And we haven't got a light with us," said Jack blankly.

"Nor is there one in the quarter-boat."

"Shall I go back to the Roosevelt and get one, sir?"

(To be continued.)

FROM ALL POINTS

WOODEN CLOTHES IN SIGHT.

While the clothing manufacturers have not yet announced their intention to place on the market clothes made of wood, they may eventually do so, if the experiments of cotton spinners should prove successful.

Bleached cotton is almost pure cellulose, and proceeding on that basis the investigators have discovered a method whereby thread may be manufactured from cellulose extracted from spruce. The cotton spinners say that in time they expect to produce with this material clothing at extremely low prices.

The finest product, it is averred, will be cheaper than cotton in the bale, and there is no reason, they contend, why the material should not take a fast dye. The wood-cloth would of course wear well, and it could be made non-inflammable.

PUPILS IN MONTCLAIR GAMBLE.

Five Montclair, N. J., school girls matched 25-cent pieces and one of them won \$6. A school boy gambled and won a pipe. Scout Commissioner Frank F. Gray says so in the Scout Gazette, the paper through which he appeals to the boy and girl scouts and their parents.

Gambling and thievery are prevalent among the school children of the town, Mr. Gray asserts. He says he has a list of the boy and girl gamblers and thieves. The names of the quarter matchers and youngster who won a pipe are in this list. The children habitually "roll the bones" and "cut the cards" for money, he says. Locks in the school buildings have been tampered with and valuables stolen from lockers, he charges.

Blame for these conditions is placed by the Scout Commissioner upon the artificial "so-called social life" wherein "children are mannikins surfeited with unhealthy pleasures" and the "too liberal allowance of spending money."

BADGER VISITS POLICE.

The Muncie, Ind., Police Department, three members of which distinguished themselves recently by starting a real bear hunt in McCulloch Park—perhaps the first bear hunt here in a hundred years—now has brought to a successful conclusion a badger hunt—and it was a real badger, too, and not the kind that usually is seen at the well-known badger and dog fights native to Indiana.

This badger wished to be hunted so badly apparently that it came to the door of Central Police Station in the small hours of the morning and was seen by William Rutherford, a policeman. Rutherford and Arthur Jones, another policeman, pur-

sued the animal through the business district and finally Jones, who is very heavy, fell on it in an alley and the animal expired, possibly from fright.

The policemen sold the hide for \$7.50, which sum they put in the Police Department charity fund. Where the animal came from could not be explained. There are no wild badgers in the woods about the city, so far as known.

MUSKRAT FARMING.

If the supply of muskrat fur is to be maintained when many of the swamp and marsh lands now occupied by the animals are reclaimed for agricultural purposes "muskrat farming" will have to become more general.

For the present, however, a sufficient number of muskrats to meet demands for their fur are trapped from marshes and swamps that are for the most part unprotected, millions of skins being taken each year. So long as the natural breeding places remain undisturbed and reasonable closed seasons are maintained there is little likelihood of the numbers of the animals being depleted. This is because these animals multiply much more rapidly than most other fur bearers. With adequate protection in the breeding season and with the present habitat available from 10,000,000 to 12,000,000 pelts can be taken in North America annually without depletion of the supply.

The muskrat is found throughout wide areas in North America, the habitat extending from the northern limit of trees to near the Mexican border.

The practicability of muskrat farming already has been demonstrated. The animals are easily kept, become very tame and breed well in narrow quarters. Under present economic conditions, however, keeping muskrats on preserves is more practicable than keeping them in restricted quarters. The former plan is in remunerative operation in the Chesapeake Bay region. In Dorchester County, Maryland, marshland formerly considered almost useless and now used as muskrat preserves is worth more, measured by actual income, than cultivated lands in the same vicinity. The owner of one 1,300-acre tract of marsh took in two seasons—1909 and 1910—more than 12,000 pelts, which sold for more than \$9,000. The maintaining of muskrat preserves should be an attractive business where conditions are favorable. The animals require no feeding, since the plant life of ponds and marshes furnishes abundance of food. It may even be possible to "plant" the industry in sections from which muskrats are now absent. As trapping is done in winter the business of muskrat farming is especially adapted to farmers and farmers' boys.

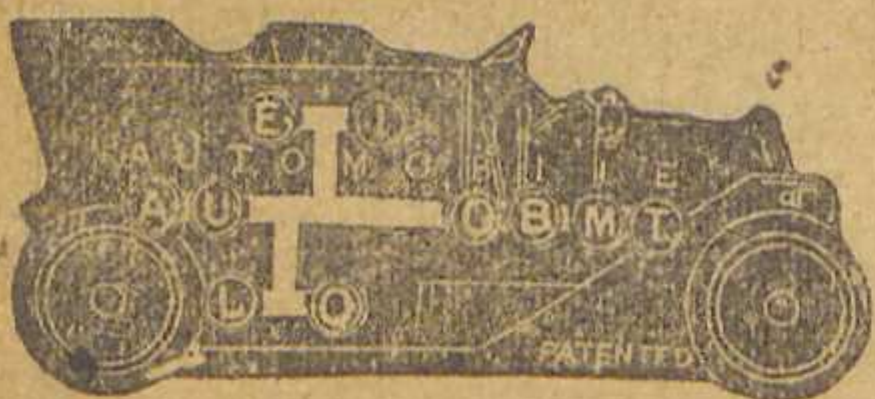
MAGIC PUZZLE KEYS.

Two keys interlocked in such a manner it seems impossible to separate them, but when learned it is easily done. Price 6c., by mail, postpaid.
H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE CREEPING MOUSE.

This is the latest novelty out. The mouse is of a very natural appearance. When placed upon a mirror, wall, window or any other smooth surface, it will creep slowly downward without leaving the perpendicular surface. It is furnished with an adhesive gum-roll underneath which makes it stick. Very amusing to both young and old. Price, 10c. by mail.

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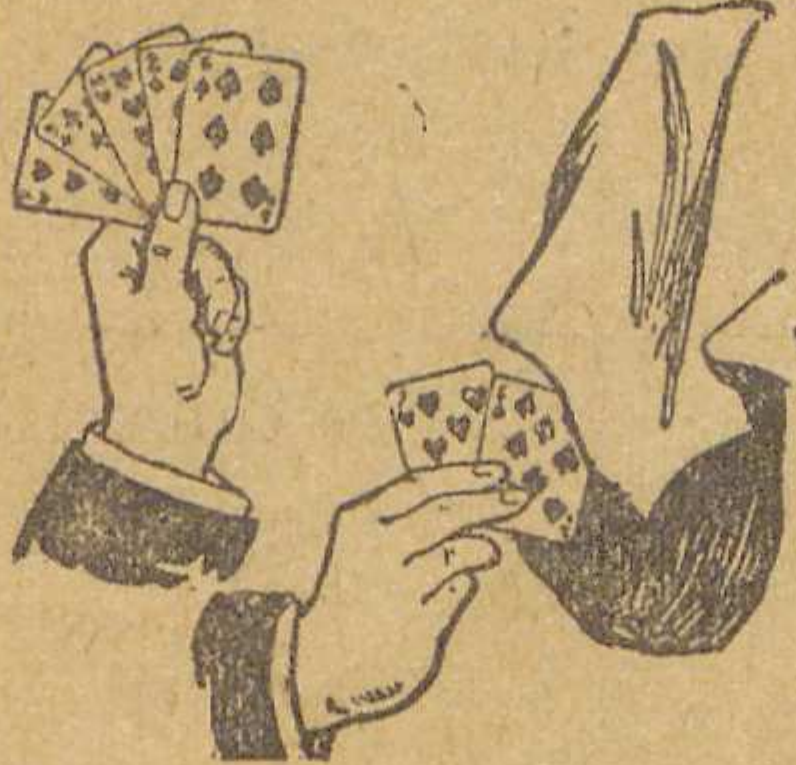


This little steel puzzle is one of the most perplexing on the market, and yet when you master it a child could do it. It measures 1 1/4 by 4 inches. The trick is to spell out words as indicated on the cut. Price 15 cents each, by mail, postpaid.
Wolff Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

ADAM'S TEASER PUZZLE.

This is a nut cracker. The way to do it is as follows: Turn the top of the two small loops toward you, taking hold of the two large loops with each hand. Hold firm the loop held with the left hand and pull the other toward the right, and at the same time impart a twisting motion away from you. You can get the rest of the directions with the puzzle. Price 12 cents each, by mail, postpaid.
Wolff Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

PHANTOM CARDS.



From five cards three are mentally selected by any one, placed under an ordinary handkerchief, performer withdraws two cards, the ones not selected; the performer invites any one to remove the other two, and to the great astonishment of all they have actually disappeared. No sleight-of-hand. Recommended as the most ingenious card trick ever invented. Price 10c. by mail, postpaid.
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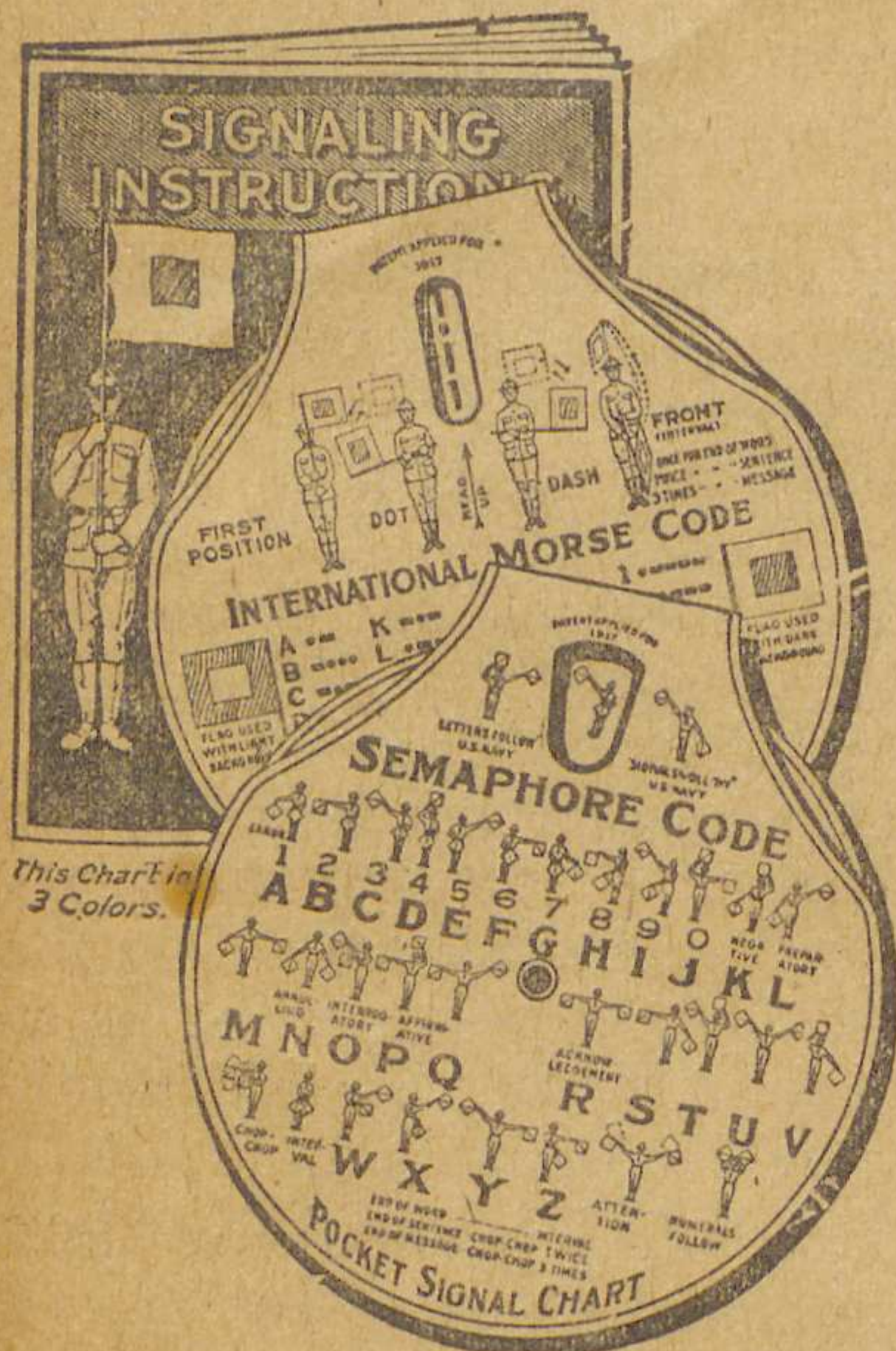
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50,000 Boys Made Happy

Read These Letters
From Happy Boys:

Shows Clear Pictures

I have been very slow in sending you an answer. I received my Moving Picture Machine a few weeks ago and I think it is a dandy, and it shows the pictures clear just as you said it would. I am very proud of it. I thank you very much for it and I am glad to have it. I gave an entertainment two days after I got it. Leopold Lamontagne, 54 Summer Ave., Central Falls, R. I.

Sold His for \$10.00 and Ordered Another

Some time ago I got one of your Machines and I am very much pleased with it. After working it for about a month I sold it for \$10.00 to a friend of mine. He has it and entertains his family nightly. I have now decided to get another one of your machines. Michael Ehereth, Mandan, N. Dak.

Would Not Give Away for \$25.00

My Moving Picture Machine is a good one and I would not give it away for \$25.00. It's the best machine I ever had and I wish everybody could have one. Addie Bresky, Jeanesville, Pa. Box 34.

Better Than a \$12.00 Machine

I am slow about turning in my thanks to you, but my Moving Picture Machine is all right. I have had it a long time and it has not been broken yet. I have seen a \$12.00 Machine but would not swap mine for it. Robert Lineberry, care of Revolution Store, Greenboro, N. C.



A Real
Moving
Picture
Show in
Your Own Home

REAL
MOVING
PICTURES

Remember, this is a Genuine Moving Picture Machine and the motion pictures are clear, sharp and distinct.

The Moving Picture Machine is finely constructed, and carefully put together by skilled workmen. It is made of Russian Metal, has a beautiful finish, and is operated by a finely constructed mechanism, consisting of an eight wheel movement, etc. The projecting lenses are carefully ground and adjusted, triple polished, standard double extra reflector, throwing a ray of light many feet, and enlarging the picture on the screen up to three or four feet in area. The light is produced by a safety carbide generator, such as is used on the largest automobiles. This throws a dazzling white light of 500 candle-power on the screen.

It is not a toy; it is a solidly constructed and durable Moving Picture Machine. The mechanism is exceedingly simple and is readily operated by the most inexperienced. The pictures shown by this marvelous Moving Picture Machine are not the common, crude and lifeless Magic Lantern variety, but are life-like photographic reproductions of actual scenes, places and people, which never tire its audiences. This Moving Picture Machine has caused a rousing enthusiasm wherever it is used.

This Moving Picture Machine which I want to send you FREE, gives clear and life-like Moving Pictures as are shown at any regular Moving Picture show. It flashes moving pictures on the sheet before you. This Machine and Box of Film are FREE—absolutely free to every boy in this land who wants to write for an Outfit, free to girls and free to older people. Read MY OFFER below, which shows you how to get this Marvelous Machine.

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HERE IS what you are to do in order to get this amazing Moving Picture Machine and the real Moving Pictures: Send your name and address—that is all. Write name and address very plainly. Mail to-day. As soon as I receive it I will mail you 20 of the most beautiful premium pictures you ever saw—all brilliant and shimmering colors. These pictures are printed in many colors and among the titles are such subjects as "Betsy Ross Making the First American Flag"—"Washington at Home"—"Battle of Lake Erie," etc. I want you to distribute these premium pictures on a special 25-cent offer among the people you know. When you have distributed the 20 premium pictures on my liberal offer you will have collected \$5.00. Send the \$5.00 to me and I will immediately send you FREE the Moving Picture Machine with complete Outfit and the Box of Film.

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A SIMPLE, SAFE, RELIABLE WAY

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If you desire an interesting booklet, "Reduce Weight Happily," write to Korein Company, NA-103, Station F, New York, N. Y.

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GAINED 25 POUNDS IN 2 MONTHS

SINCE QUITTING



TOBACCO HABIT

SUCCESSFUL CONQUEROR ATTAINED AT LAST!

HJALMAR NELSON, (address on application,) whose photo appears at the left, learned of a book and other information being given FREE, explaining how Tobacco Habit can be conquered by oneself, safely, speedily and completely. He obtained the information and is now able to report a gain of 25 pounds in weight (from 163 to 188 pounds), as well as

A THREE DAYS' VICTORY OVER SLAVERY TO TOBACCO HABIT

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"While addicted to the tobacco habit, every muscle and joint ached, and I had almost given up business. I was poor in health, weighing about 130 pounds. Now I am well, weigh 165 pounds, and can work every day. I have never wanted to chew or smoke since following the Woods method."—A. F. Shelton, (No. 199600), Pittsylvania Co., Va. (Full address on application.)

"I have no craving for tobacco; this I consider wonderful after having used a pipe for 35 years. I have gained 12 pounds in two months, which is very good at the age of 59 years. To say that the benefits far exceed my expectations, is putting it mildly. Anyone in doubt can refer to me."—John Brodie, (No. 153235), Wapello Co., Iowa. (Full address on application.)

"I had weighed as low as 128 pounds, never got over 135 while I used tobacco. Now I weigh 156 pounds. Everyone wants to know why I got so fleshy; I tell them to follow Edward J. Woods' method for overcoming tobacco and find out."—W. S. Morgan, (No. 11815 K), Cooke Co., Tex. (Full address on application.)

"I smoked for more than 20 years, but now I am proud to say that for the past nine months I have no crave for smoking; I feel better and am gaining in weight every month since I stopped."—William Crawford, (No. 206737), Philadelphia Co., Penna. (Full address on application.)

"May God bless you. I am feeling finer every day of my life—not like the same person. My appetite is better, and my stomach is all right. I can hold out in walking better, my voice is better and my heart is stronger."—Mrs. Mattie E. Stevenson, (No. 230738), St. John Co., Fla. (Full address on application.)

"Have used tobacco in all forms (mostly chewing) for 15 years, using about a plug of tobacco a day. I began following your Method on a Friday noon and after that day the craving for tobacco was gone. I am always ready to praise you and the good work you are doing. I can also say that I have gained nine pounds in seven weeks, and feel like a new man."—Robert S. Brown, (No. 229852), Worcester Co., Mass. (Full address on application.)

"My husband hasn't smoked a single cigarette, and has no desire to smoke since following your method of quitting. He looks like a new man—the best I ever saw him. He gained seventeen pounds, and is feeling fine."—Mrs. Carl C. Rogers, (No. 224360), Iredell Co., North Carolina. (Full address on application.)

"I was using about one pound and a half of chewing tobacco a week, but since quitting through your system, I have gained about 15 pounds, and have better health by far, than before."—W. S. Powell, (No. 139149), Harper Co., Okla. (Full address on application.)

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Tobacco is poisonous and seriously injures the health in several ways, causing such disorders as nervous dyspepsia, sleeplessness, gas belching, gnawing or other uncomfortable sensation in stomach, constipation, headache, weak eyes, loss of vigor, red spots on skin, throat irritation, catarrh, asthma; bronchitis, heart failure, melancholy, lung trouble, impure (poisoned) blood, heartburn, torpid liver, loss of appetite, bad teeth, foul breath, lassitude, lack of ambition, weakening and falling out of hair and many other disorders.

Overcome that peculiar nervousness and craving for cigarettes, cigars, pipe, chewing tobacco or snuff.

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FREE



"I sleep well and have no more restless or nervous feeling. I am past seventy-eight years of age, and feel fine since adopting the Woods Method."

—John P. Monter (Photo above)
Civil War Veteran

(Full address on application.)

Edward J. Woods, WA-103, Station F, New York, N.Y.